Football Nationwide League, Division One: Barnsley 2 Bradford 0

Barnsley tap a rich seam of smiles

David Lacey

BARNSLEY'S arrival in the Premiership next season will be an aptly-timed reminder to the game about where its true heart lies. It is safe to assume that at Oakwell on Saturday, amid the sea of faces rejoicing at the club's promotion, nobody was considering the benefits a share flotation might bring.

All that mattered was that Barnsley, having beaten Bradford City 2-0, were up and for the first time in their 110-year history would be entertaining the English game's aristocracy on a more regular basis than the occasional cup tie. Many fans shed unashamed tears; it meant that much to them.

It was a moment for South Yorkshiremen to relish. Former international cricket umpire Dickie Bird — "Ah said they'd win two-nil" — never looked happier on an afternoon beset by rain and bad light.

Michael Parkinson, Barnsley FC's Venerable Bede, could join in the celebrations content in the knowledge that, if a Dutch centre-back called Arjan de Zeeuw was not quite in the Skinner Normanton tradition, the eventual appearance of Peter Shirtliff, born in Hoyland rather than Holland, restored some local flavour.

Every time a team goes up a division the occasion is a happy one but it is hard to remember a promotion being greeted with such universal warmth. Memories of the miners' strike and the pit closures that followed run deep, and the people of



Yorkshire terrier . . . John Hendrie celebrates at Oakwell after clinching promotion PHOTO: ANTON WANT

Barnsley were overdue something to cheer.

"This has given the town something to smile about, something to feel a bit of hope about," said the club's chairman John Dennis, a 46-year-old fruit and vegetable wholesaler. "The place has had a few knocks but the club has achieved a lot. You saw the effect today, 16-and-a-half thousand of our supporters all smiling. You would have to have been around the place a long time to remember something similar."

Just how long Barnsley and their followers will smile in the Premiership is a matter of conjecture. Staying up next season will depend not so much on how well the team perform against Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool but the regularity with which they take points off those likely to share the struggle to survive.

Barnsley's performance last Saturday, composed at the outset but giving way to nervous tension after half-time, offered a poor yardstick by which to judge their chances of lasting more than a season in the Premiership. Bradford played well enough in patches to gain the point which would have given them a better chance of avoiding an immediate return to the Second Division, and the fact they did not get it owed much to the steadying influence of Redfearn and Sheridan in Barnsley's midfield.

Even so, the might of the roar which greeted Marcelle's goal three minutes from the end reflected the anxiety which had built up among the fans following Wilkinson's glancing, bouncing header past Davison midway through the first half. When Sunglot hit a Barnsley post just over a quarter-of-an-hour from the end Oakwell could not help reflecting on the chances on the rebound missed by Wilkinson and Hendrie after Davison had blocked shots from Redfearn.

Still, Barnsley showed enough of their stronger qualities — good passing in midfield and plenty of inventiveness around the opposing penalty area — to suggest that from the point of view of skills and imagination they should not be out of their depth next season. But they will have to cover more ground at a greater pace, and 38 matches will still seem like 46.

Danny Wilson, the bright young Barnsley manager, cited Wimbledon as the example of what can be achieved on limited resources. "All the managers I've had in my career have appreciated good football," he added.

"Nobody I ever played for used long-ball tactics and that just sticks with you." So clearly Barnsley will try to emulate early Wimbledon in spirit rather than substance.

● Upwardly mobile Bury have done it again. In two seasons the Lancashire club have gone from the Third to the First Division. Bury needed just one point and a goalless draw against Watford at Vicarage Road was enough to give them promotion for the second successive season.

Meanwhile at Watford, pop singer Elton John has taken over as chairman for the second time. He was at the helm in the 1970s and 1980s when the club rose from the Fourth Division to the old First Division.

Cryptic crossword by Crispa

Across

1 Exercises for performance in forces (9)
6 Transport dope to get money (5)
9 Rear coaches (5)
10 Stone as the result of a laboratory bloomer (9)
11 A safety device to price — not essential (10)
12 Cunning chief (4)
14 Poles, if given food, enjoyed the aroma (7)
15 The ship with a well-qualified person back in control (7)
17 Suits and coats in variety (7)
19 The entertainer, having some heart, is tender (7)
20 Quits before dark (4)
22 Sort of fight nobody will pay to see (4-3-3)
25 Bear with an ill-disposed dancer (9)
26 This country's popular benefit for retirement (5)
27 Put down English conservationists with little hesitation (5)
28 Ivy is at all times aware of environmental responsibility (9)

Down

1 Increased turn-over just the same (3,2)
2 A man's make-up is of absorbing interest to him! (9)
3 The novice needs caring support (10)
4 Coloured lads — ten perhaps (7)
5 Marine boys' quarters (7)
6 A light or weighty timber? (4)
7 The player caught in a rocky situation (5)
8 Extra money's required for the cleaner beset by inflation (9)
13 Cutting up ingots — nice work (10)
14 Black will accept fish, but may be rattled (9)
16 Many is the employee the French treat badly (9)
18 Tree requiring some maintenance (7)
19 Made to declare date of birth — as usual (7)
21 Take down round about fifty and display (5)
23 Field certain servicemen become proficient in (5)
24 Fruit? Some hope! A rice-pudding more likely! (4)

Last week's solution

F		K		P		S		T		T		U		F
L	A	N	C	A	S	T	E	R		H	I	N	D	U
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T		D		S		T		I		D		N		S
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Rugby Union

Wasps look to build on glory

Robert Armstrong

WASPS may find their professional life is never the same again after clinching the Courage League One championship with a 26-15 victory over Northampton at rainswept Franklins Gardens last Saturday.

The first problem their director of rugby Nigel Melville faces, at a club celebrated for its friendly, family ethos, will be to improve and expand the squad for next season without disturbing the delicate chemistry that has propelled them to their first trophy since 1990, when they also won the league.

Wasps hope to savour their success with a win in Saturday's final game against Harlequins at The Stoop, having already triumphed at nine away grounds this season. Their remarkable ability to play the same winning game home and away has confounded their closest challengers as well as fostering the self-belief that has enabled them to score more than 30 points a game. Goalkicker Gareth Rees, who scored 16 points at Northampton, has averaged 14 a game.

Nevertheless the London club will find staying at the top harder than getting there, given the lucrative offers rival clubs will make to their best players. It will be intriguing to see how far Melville gets with his moderate wage policy.

"We knew we'd never be talked about until we won something," said Wasps' captain Lawrence Dallaglio, whose contract has another year to run. "We realised we had a chance of the title when we began the season with six league wins, and it helped that we had a young, enthusiastic team of guys who wanted to play for each other. Next season, though, we will need a squad of at least 30 players capable of first-team rugby to stay at the top."

Melville's ability in the transfer market, which saw him strengthen the side after Christmas with the introduction of Reed, Henderson and Logan, should allow Wasps to make a more credible challenge in the European Cup.

According to Rees, whose adventurous counter-attacks have been as important as his goal-kicking, Wasps were physically ahead in a season that put greater demands on players to be fitter, faster and stronger than their opponents.

Three penalties from 30 metres or more and a touchline conversion by Rees gave Wasps a 16-9 half-time lead.

Near the end King was taken off on a stretcher after a jolting midfield hit by Allen, and Rees switched to fly-half with Ufton taking his place at full-back. To his credit Rees suddenly stepped up a gear in the fifth minute of injury time, scooping a loose ball into the hands of Logan, who sprinted home for his ninth try in eight games. Like true champions Wasps signed off with an imperious flourish.

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The Washington Post Le Monde

Swept to power on a wave of hope

COMMENT
Hugo Young

TONY BLAIR had two objectives during this election. The first was to win, the second to minimise every expectation of what would happen then. He wanted to over-perform, but under-promise, and thought the first depended on the second. Now he has got a totally unforeseen result. The strategy turns out to have produced a triumphant contradiction. So huge was his performance that it has given rise to massive hopes and dreams, far exceeding what he promised in order to secure his victory. The voters have rolled over all his hesitations, declaring for a landslide that's wholly at odds with what he can deliver.

The scenes when the new leader arrived in Downing Street were extraordinary to behold. Everyone seemed so happy. Though choreographed by New Labour, the pictures did not lie. Margaret Thatcher at her peak of power never attracted such a depth of heartfelt merriment, such un-British scenes of joy and laughter. These were the jubilant faces of a no-longer silent majority, the millions who produced a result that a new generation will look back on rather as their parents did on 1945.

It's as if a huge burden has been lifted off the nation's back: ministers encrusted with arrogance, MPs sunk in sleaze, a party that long since stopped listening to the people, above all a national mood which for five years has been shaped by the impression that there was no alternative. The election cleans out the House. But it also purges, for a while, national pessimism. The voters shouted for a new era — yet this is a demand the new governing class is absolutely pledged to temper.



On the threshold of power . . . Tony Blair and his wife Cherie arrive at 10 Downing Street PHOTOGRAPH: RUSSELL BOYCE

Outside No 10, the new Prime Minister was already trying to say that. His demeanour was exultant. He seized the moment, pressing his gratitude for being given this solemn responsibility. There was a bit of Kennedy in his intonation, his voice rising up the register at each sentence's last syllable. He remains an uncynical politician, about everything except the Tories and Old Labour, promising "practical measures in pursuit of noble causes".

He really means it — but beside that ringing phrase sat the mantra about governing as he had been elected. "We were elected as New Labour and we will govern as New Labour." If this sentence means anything to anyone who hasn't been associated with the inwardness of the great Blair-Mandelson project, it must be as the synonym for a cautious centrism that promises only limited results.

In judging how such tension will be addressed, the relevant contrast

continued on page 16

Victorious Labour heals Europe rift

Guardian Reporters

ROBIN COOK, Britain's new Foreign Secretary, symbolically marked the end of almost two decades of British hostility towards Brussels this week by announcing that the new Labour Government will sign up to the European Social Chapter on employees' rights.

His move follows the landslide victory of Tony Blair's New Labour party in last week's general election, which saw the Conservatives reduced to a rump English party of 165 seats and Paddy Ashdown's Liberal Democrats boosted to 46 MPs. John Major immediately announced he would resign as Tory party leader as Labour won a record 419 seats in the new Parliament.

Mr Cook said: "We will tell our European partners that we want the rights and benefits of the Social Chapter to extend to the people of Britain. It marks a fresh start in Europe for Britain, working with other members as a partner, not as an opponent."

In another sign of Labour's Euro-friendly attitude, Britain sent its new minister for Europe, Doug Henderson, to Brussels for talks on Monday that are preparing the ground for the Amsterdam summit in June.

Mr Henderson, a former trade union negotiator, is seen by Mr Blair as pragmatic and non-ideological on Europe. He will replace Sir Stephen Wall, the British ambassador to Brussels, and bring Britain into line with France and Germany, which are represented permanently by ministers on the group reviewing the Maastricht treaty.

Under the Social Chapter only two directives have been passed in its five-year existence. One gives all working parents the right to three months' unpaid leave after the birth of their child. The other concerns setting up works councils in multinational firms.

Mr Major negotiated an opt-out from the Social Chapter and warned it could be a Trojan horse that could cost 500,000 jobs in Britain.

Britain's EU partners fêted the new government's return to Brussels with a warmth that would not have disgraced the biblical welcome accorded the prodigal son. When Mr Henderson promised fellow ministers "a fresh start" to relations with Europe, they in return declared that Britain had finally "abandoned the fringes to return to the European mainstream".

Mr Henderson's declaration was heard by the assembled ministers and diplomats in silence. "I have never witnessed anything quite like it. You could have heard a pin drop," one said.

But, despite the warm words, the European Commission gave warning of possible problems with Labour's manifesto promise to cut valued-added tax on fuel from 8 per cent to 5 per cent. Under EU rules, governments may raise VAT levels to 15 per cent, but not lower them.

Meanwhile Mr Cook was due to visit Paris and Bonn this week on a hastily-arranged trip to see his French and German counterparts, Hervé de Charette and Klaus Kinkel.

On Friday he and Mr Blair were expected to meet the Dutch prime minister and foreign minster, Wim Kok and Hans Van Mierlo, in London. "We want to draw a line under the fruitless, sterile confrontation of the past," Mr Cook told BBC radio. "We are confident that we are going to get a better deal for Britain if we work together with other European states rather than fighting them as enemies."

● In his first meeting with another head of government since his election, Mr Blair was to meet the Irish prime minister, John Bruton, in Downing Street on Thursday to discuss the Irish peace process.

UK election, pages 10-14
Comment, page 16

Shattered Tories search for a leader

Michael White

MICHAEL HOWARD, the former Home Secretary, was poised to join the Tory leadership race on Tuesday after John Major's resignation and Michael Heseltine's dramatic departure from the contest with renewed heart trouble threw all previous calculations to the wind.

John Redwood, the former Welsh secretary, Kenneth Clarke, the outgoing chancellor, and Peter Lilley, standard-bearer of the libertarian right, have already declared themselves runners. Stephen Dorrell was expected to put his name forward as the centre-left alternative to the combative Mr Clarke, whose chances were hardly boosted when Peter Mandelson, the new Minister Without Portfolio, suggested he should join New Labour because he had more in common with the party than the Conservatives.

There was also speculation that allies of Michael Portillo, who lost his seat, were angling to "sell" their votes to whichever candidate of the right promises to make Mr Portillo chairman of the Conservative party when Brian Mahwinney steps down.

Tory MPs and activists in search of a healing candidacy after their party's worst electoral drubbing since 1906 were also looking to the former Welsh secretary, William Hague — aged 36 — who has still to decide whether to risk an early bid for Downing Street, knowing it could condemn him to years of frustration.

"He's aware of the pitfalls of his youth and of peaking too soon," said one pro-Hague MP. "But he's the only one who has the intellectual capacity to revive the party politically and organisationally."

Before Mr Heseltine's rush to hospital with angina last Saturday, his supporters were convinced that — this time — he would unify the party and have the experience to harry the untested Blair team. Unless Mr Lilley or Mr Hague makes a dramatic breakthrough, the contest is likely to be a left-right run-off between Mr Clarke and Mr Howard.

Major hits buffers, page 14

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Peruvian injustice gives legitimacy to guerrillas

THE Peruvian hostage crisis is over, and is it not symbolic that among the hostages only a judge died (Military strike frees Lima hostages, May 4)? For despite the rhetorical, politically pre-emptive use of the term "terrorists", the Tupac Amaru are guerrillas whose legitimacy is reborn each time justice dies among their people. The government of Peru continues to violate international norms of human rights in its savage treatment of political prisoners — injustices protected by the law itself.

It is an open secret that in regimes such as Peru's the political and economic élite convert the legal system into an arm of capitalism so that it may flourish uninhibited by the rule of law. In this setting all pretence at distributive justice is abandoned, and the inherent, potential criminality of unfettered capitalism is unleashed. Fusing law with military and police enforcement of its Darwinian ground rules, capitalism brags openly of its blood ties to an ugly, successful stepbrother — organised crime.

In the international community we know these things. So, like the Catholic monsignor used in Fujimori's bad faith negotiations, we should weep now, in genuine relief that most of the hostages are alive, but also in shame and sorrow that, on our watch, another justice has died.
Carol Leigh Rice,
Victoria, BC, Canada

MY CONGRATULATIONS for your editorial (Brutal end to the Lima siege, May 4). I would like to add a few comments.

We can feel pity for the young MRTA guerrillas who died, but it vanishes as soon as we think of the hundreds who have been killed by the ignorance, fanaticism and arrogance of those guerrillas movements.

Fujimori took a chance and won. Violence is not a good way of solving problems, but how can anybody reach a compromise with a group of terrorists who don't care about bombing or killing?

It is a pity the way Germany, on the one hand, expels Bosnian refugees to their destroyed homeland without any consideration and, on the other, grants refuge to MRTA representatives. But I agree that it is better to keep them under the scrutiny of Western police than let them disappear in some terrorist-friendly environment, such as North Korea or Libya.
Ivan Penaloza,
Caracas, Venezuela

I'M not sure if my country — Australia — added to the flurry of international congratulations for President Fujimori at the end of the Lima siege. The strongest image I have from the reports is that of a teenager screaming "I surrender", being deliberately shot down and then having her forehead blown apart with an extra bullet, just to make sure. You can call her a dangerous terrorist all you like; she still looked like a gutsy and politicised but tired and terrified teenager to me. I hope my government did not fall over itself in the rush to congratulate hers. Military brilliance, yeah, yeah.

The fact is, the Peruvian élite sip cocktails and have surrendering opposition voices gunned down, while one in five Peruvians do not eat enough and hundreds rot in jail.
Alison Clarke,
Guadalajara, Mexico

Truth behind graft in Gaza

WHILE evidence of corruption among Palestinian Authority officials undoubtedly exists, David Hirst (Shameless in Gaza, April 27) chose to cite none of it. Instead, he relied on an inaccurate and insulting diatribe mainly directed at individuals. Nabil Shaath's so-called recent wedding (it took place two years ago) may have been extravagant, but the fact that he "took a wife young enough to be his daughter" is irrelevant to allegations of corruption. Nor do comments on Suha Arafat's hairdressing habits, or the size and dress style of her British nanny contribute anything to the body of knowledge on the complexities of the Palestinian situation.

Before the intifada, drinking alcohol in Gaza's beach-side restaurants was commonplace. The intifada led to greater religious conservatism as well as a general aversion to public and social extravagance. The return of Palestinians from other countries — not just Tunisia — has certainly contributed to a more progressive social environment.

Hirst implies that alcohol is available only in the Zahra Al Mada'in nightclub, and that it is only the returnees who want a more relaxed environment. Since the end of the intifada, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem have all seen the opening of new restaurants, bars and nightclubs, financed by local entrepreneurs — changes welcomed by Christians and Muslims alike.

An investigative report on the operations of Al Bahr company, substantiated by evidence of its corruption, would be welcomed by all those concerned with the plight of ordinary Palestinians.
Jean Lennock,
Ramallah, West Bank

PC posturing on moral issues

THE assumption behind your editorial on euthanasia (Death and a moral minefield, April 6) seems to be that the case for its legalisation is compelling but that it has not received adequate consideration. So you recommend "a national commission to clarify . . . the issues". But the case for legalising euthanasia has been heard *ad nauseam* by eminent bodies, who have decisively rejected it.

The House of Lords' Select Committee (1993-94), the New York State Task Force on Life and the Law (1994), and the Canadian Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide (1995), which all contained members sympathetic to the practice in certain limited circumstances, were none the less unanimous in opposing relaxation of its legal prohibition. They recognised the grave threat to many vulnerable persons that would result from permissive legislation.

The Guardian would be more impressive if its writers could find the courage to do some revisionary thinking on the limits of permissive morals legislation instead of treating us to predictable PC posturing.
Luke Gormally,
Director, Linacre Centre Health Care Ethics, London

ALTHOUGH not a religious fanatic I got the creeps reading Dr Bert Keizer's eloquent essay (In search of a decent death, April 13). I really do hope that this seemingly caring doctor is right in his belief that the euthanasia law is not, and will not, be abused in Holland.

Americans have legitimate reasons to be worried, though. In our country some basic rights — taken for granted by the Dutch — such as the right to health care, are not guaranteed. And that's why no one can convince me that many desperate and poor people wouldn't be pushed to "choose" euthanasia, because it would be the only economically realistic alternative. It has nothing to do with doctors, and everything to do with money.
Marja Hagborg,
Chicago, USA

Strawberries leave bad taste

THE struggle of farmworkers in California (US strawberry fields turn sour, April 20) has several dimensions that were not mentioned in the article. First, the country allows illegal immigrants from Mexico just enough border crossing accessibility together with scant regulation of the hiring practices of owners and contractors to ensure large numbers of strikebreakers when groups like the United Farm Workers try to organise the workers.

Second, the illegals are denied health and education services for their families (even while paying the taxes to support such services), so they are discouraged from making a permanent life in the US and have little to gain in the short term from joining a union.

Third, realistically the US should have open borders for labour forces to move in and out freely if it is going to insist on free trade regimes with its hemispheric neighbours. It is a balancing act with exploitation by the rich over the poor as the obvious goal.
Tom Frantz,
Highgate, St Mary, Jamaica

The future in a concrete jungle

HAVING recently spent four years living in Kuala Lumpur, I find myself at odds with Martin Jacques's vision of KL's future (Malaysia takes a leap into future, April 6). Describing the multi-media super corridor, the writer seems to reluctantly admit that, "inevitably there will be some environmental damage".

I have witnessed Malaysian progress and fear for their country if this "corridor" is to be "the heart of 21st century Malaysia". In the space of four years, hillsides were stripped bare to be replaced by precariously perched concrete high-rises with artificial greenery and clipped gardens replacing the sprawl of jungle. To clear an area of 75sq km will destroy the natural environment and its dependent wildlife.

If Malaysia really wants progress and a monument to the 21st century it should turn the super corridor into a jungle preserve, where the children of Malaysia (Indian, Chinese and Malay) may go to play, escape technology, experience the true endangered Malaysian environment, and perhaps even get to know one another personally.
Mark McGough,
Windhoek, Namibia

Briefly

SO THERE are now more than 6 million people in the world "worth more than $1 million" (Finance page, April 27). Didn't I read in the Guardian Weekly some time last year that 1,000 people die each day of diseases that would cost $1 a day to treat? Now if each of those 6 million could be convinced to contribute $1.85 a month . . . But no doubt those good people's assets are tied up in more urgent and worthwhile projects — such as fitting camels through the eyes of needles.
Bruce Collins,
Kiel, Germany

CORRECT me if I'm wrong, but haven't we long known that Iran was sending out death squads (EU moves to isolate Iran over terrorism, April 20)? Why the sudden outrage over a fact that has been in the public domain even before the Salman Rushdie affair? Those of us who have crossed Tehran have been looking over our shoulders for years; only Rushdie is provided with hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of protection.

The only purpose a European Union ban now would serve is to boost the chances of hardline candidates in the forthcoming presidential elections in Iran.
Cherry Mosteshar,
Oxford

ACCORDING to the Washington Post article (Judge delays tough immigration law, April 6), the poverty line for a family of four in the US is $17,600. About one-tenth of 1 per cent of us here earn that much. Poverty? You cannot be serious, man.
John Orford,
Misamis Oriental, Philippines

WOULD someone explain what the term "radical centre" — as used by the Labour party leader Tony Blair — means? To quote George Orwell: "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought".
George Kerevan,
Edinburgh

I MUST register my dismay at the behaviour of my fellow Canadians, who feel compelled to defend our country against the calumnies tossed our way by the socks-and-sandals set in England. If these learned descendants of Shakespeare, Johnson and Dickens want to portray us as a bunch of semi-literate dullards squatting in the frozen tundra, so much the better. I do wish that Canadians would learn that the well-kept secret that Canada appears to be in some quarters will neither be well-kept nor secret if they insist on extolling its virtues to the world.
Jack Gemmell
Toronto, Canada

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Rebels press on to Zaire's capital

Chris McGreal in Kinshasa

ZAIREAN rebels have warned that they will press ahead with an assault on the capital, Kinshasa, after peace talks collapsed last Sunday despite President Mobutu Sese Seko's offer to resign.

The first meeting between the beleaguered dictator and the rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, aboard a South African ship off the coast of Congo, disintegrated amid disagreement over the terms of the president's resignation and who will inherit the power he has held for 32 years.

Although the host of the negotiations, the South African president Nelson Mandela, claimed progress had been made because the two sides agreed to meet again next week to "narrow the gap", Mr Kabila said he had no intention of halting his offensive on the capital, which could come within days.

"I made it clear a ceasefire is out of the question and my forces will continue to advance on all fronts. If we make it to Kinshasa before the eight days [the next meeting] then too bad. But we cannot wait while he makes up his mind," Mr Kabila said.

Many of the capital's residents believe the last chance to save it from assault has been lost.

Rebel forces are reported to be within 65km of the city and massing troops in Kenge, 200km away. Mr Kabila said an attack could come almost immediately and that an early target would be the international airport.

There are few signs of a serious attempt to defend the city, but residents fear the growing uncertainty could spark anarchy ahead of the rebels' arrival. The capital's military governor appealed for people to remain calm as news of the talks' failure and the threatened assault spread.

The United States advised its citizens to leave Kinshasa immediately. Britain, France and the US have several thousand troops in Brazzaville, across the Congo river, ready to evacuate foreigners.

In the past few days the rebels have seized Mr Mobutu's birthplace at Lisala and are also marching on his jungle palace at Gbadolite in the far northwest.

The collapse of the talks was a severe blow to weeks of US and South African shuttle diplomacy, which had hammered out a face-saving deal for Mr Mobutu under which he would hand power to an interim president who would negotiate with Mr Kabila.

Mr Mobutu agreed initially to the international plan, provided he did not have to cede power directly to his foe. But Mr Kabila, after delaying the talks by two days, rejected that.

After the talks broke up Mr Mobutu was winched ashore in a cage because advanced prostate cancer left him unable to climb the gangway.

US and South African officials directed much of their anger over the failure at Mr Kabila. They accused him of duplicity for indicating to mediators that he was prepared to compromise on the transfer of power but then doing his best to scupper the negotiations by failing to arrive on time and then sticking to his original demand for total control.

● More than 100 Hutu refugees suffocated or were crushed to death last Sunday in a train carrying them from a refugee camp in Zaire to be airlifted home to Rwanda, a United Nations official said.

Aid workers saw dozens of bodies tumbling from open railway carriages as the train from Biaro camp, 40km away, pulled into Kisangani station.

The head of the Kisangani office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Kilian Kleinschmidt, estimated that more than 100 people had died. Hundreds were injured. "This is one of the most horrifying events I have ever seen," he said.

UNHCR officials had been told by Zairean rebel authorities to expect 2,800 refugees. But the six carriages carried hundreds more.

Survivors said thousands of refugees had swarmed on to the train as it pulled out, forcing children and the sick to the floor.

Le Monde, page 18
Washington Post, page 20



A ship crammed with more than 1,000 Albanians heading across the Adriatic towards the Italian coast last Sunday. It left Velipoja, near the northern port of Scutari, despite the presence in Albania of an Italian-led multinational force PHOTOGRAPH: LUCA TURI

Yemen's rulers hold on

YEMEN'S ruling General People's Congress (GPC) won 187 seats in the 301-member parliament in the first general elections since a 1994 civil war nearly tore the country apart.

Yemen's Supreme Elections Committee (SEC) on Monday said that the Islah party, the GPC's Islamist junior coalition partner in the outgoing parliament, won 53 seats. Independents won 54 seats and two opposition parties took five seats.

The statement said the results of two constituencies had yet to be announced but described the latest figures as final results of the April 27 polls.

GPC wants a coalition with Islah because that will help keep its militant Islamist wing under control. Currently Islah runs Islamic institutes — ostensibly religious schools — which it uses for indoctrination and recruitment of party members. If Islah refuses to join the coalition, these will be brought under state control.

The main opposition Yemen Socialist party, some of whose leaders launched a secessionist bid that triggered the civil war, and three others boycotted the elections to protest against alleged irregularities.

The government has denied opposition claims that military and security personnel were used to fix the poll registration process before the arrival of international election monitors.

Islah has accused the SEC of bias, threatening court action in an election marred by shooting incidents, in which 22 people died.

In united Yemen's first elections in 1993, the GPC won 123, Islah 62, and the Yemen Socialist Party 56. Independents won 47 seats while the rest went to Baathist and Nasserite parties.

The GPC's secretary-general, Abdul-Karim Iryani, said that 39 independents had joined the GPC, making it the single largest bloc in parliament. Many of them are GPC party officials who stood as independents.

Mr Iryani, who is also deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, said that six independents had joined an alliance with Islah. — *Reuter*

EU row with Iran deepens

Ian Black in London and Ian Traynor in Bonn

IRAN's confrontation with the European Union escalated last week as member states decided not to return their ambassadors to Tehran until Iran backed down from its refusal to accept the German and Danish envoys.

Britain and all other EU members except Italy responded to a German request and kept their diplomats at home after Iran scorned warnings about terrorism and told Bonn and Copenhagen not to bother sending their envoys back. Diplomats said the EU would be seeking "clarifications" from Tehran.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's spiritual leader, had ordered that Germany's ambassador should not be admitted "for a period of time" and that Iranian envoys should not return to EU capitals.

Denmark's ambassador was similarly snubbed to undermine the EU's attempt to preserve unity by acting in concert — despite strong and embarrassingly public differences between member states on how to deal with Iran.

Seeking to exploit these divisions, Tehran issued a series of mocking and triumphant statements after EU foreign ministers, meeting in Luxembourg last week, agreed to suspend ministerial visits, crack down on Iranian intelligence activities, and suspend the "critical dialogue" with Iran.

But they conspicuously failed to impose even the mildest of economic sanctions, reflecting Iran's enormous importance as the world's fourth-largest oil producer and market for more than $11 billion of EU exports.

Relations between Britain and Iran took a turn for the worse on Monday when a Tehran newspaper claimed that the top UK diplomat in the capital, Jeffrey James, was a spy. Mr James is the chargé d'affaires at the embassy.

The EU acted in response to a court verdict in Germany on April 10 accusing Iranian leaders of ordering the killing in 1992 of four Kurdish dissidents in the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin.

All EU ambassadors, except the Greek envoy, were recalled from Tehran after the court ruling. Tehran retaliated by recalling its envoys from Europe.

The Week

ELIE Wiesel, Nobel peace prize laureate, human rights activist and Auschwitz survivor, is to be honorary chairman of the $175 million fund set up by Swiss banks and companies to compensate Holocaust victims.

IN A victory for the tobacco industry, a Florida jury cleared R J Reynolds Tobacco Co of responsibility for the death of a smoker who died of lung cancer.
Finance, page 23

A BOMB attack on the crowded ticket hall of a railway station in southern Russia and a skirmish between Chechen gunmen and Russian troops have aggravated relations between Moscow and the newly installed separatist regime in Chechenia.

A PACKAGE of civil rights laws just passed in Hawaii makes the state the most liberal in the United States for gay couples. But the measures also contain an attempt to nullify the expected legislation of same-sex marriages.

LEADING figures in Swapo, Namibia's ruling party, plan to try to have the country's constitution changed to allow President Sam Nujoma to run for a third term.

A NEW type of vaccine based on DNA has blocked the Aids virus in chimpanzees. US researchers claim that the vaccine is "unprecedented" in a primate species susceptible to HIV-1.

AUSTRALIA'S ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Butler, has been named executive chairman of the UN commission in charge of Iraqi disarmament. He replaces Rolf Ekeus, who has been in the post since its inception in 1991.

THE president of the Asian republic of Tajikistan, Imomali Rakhmonov, survived a grenade explosion that killed two people and injured 60 others.

A MAN believed to be a member of the Texan separatist group involved in a stand-off with the authorities was shot dead by police hunting two people who escaped after the siege ended peacefully.

THE controversial head of the World Health Organisation, Hiroshi Nakajima, announced that he will not seek re-election when his current term runs out next year.

THE world chess champion, Garry Kasparov, won the first game but lost the next to the IBM computer, Deep Blue.

BEIJING has ordered China's most celebrated film-maker, Zhang Yimou, to stay away from the Cannes film festival.

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Drugs squad officer Vu Xuan Truong takes the stand in a Hanoi courtroom PHOTOGRAPH: TRI HIEL

Police exposed by drug trial in Vietnam

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

HUNDREDS of Vietnamese crowded into a Hanoi courtroom last week for the start of a drugs trial that threatens to expose top-level narcotics trafficking in the country's powerful internal security apparatus.

More than 10 of the 22 defendants, including police, customs and border security officers, could receive the death penalty for their part in a ring suspected of smuggling more than 300kg of heroin into the country.

Particular interest is focused on the testimony of an interior ministry drugs squad captain, Vu Xuan Truong, who was quoted in the state-run Lao Dong newspaper as promising to "expose some extremely important people" in exchange for leniency.

The case highlights Vietnam's emerging role as a pipeline for drugs moving from southeast Asia's golden triangle to Western markets. Heroin seizures last year more than doubled.

Authorities have given the case saturation media coverage but recently reversed an agreement to admit foreign reporters. They also disconnected the public address system that normally carries courtroom proceedings to crowds outside.

But the interior minister, Le Minh Huong, insisted that legal proceedings would not be halted. The government was "determined not to let the case sink", he said.

The case has its origins in events last year, when one of two Laotian traffickers caught bringing in 15kg of heroin broke down before a firing squad and started to name names, earning a reprieve from his death sentence.

Capt Truong was among those arrested, as well as the deputy head of the Anti-Narcotics Bureau, Vu Huu Chinh. In a raid on one of Capt Truong's three homes, 5kg of heroin and $90,000 in cash were reportedly seized.

French Socialists close poll gap

Paul Webster in Paris

WITH confidence in an election upset growing on the French left, Socialist party leaders have made it clear that they will demand a complete revision of conditions for entry into European monetary union and will emphasise the social conditions.

"Those who accept the euro without conditions . . . in violation of the spirit of Maastricht are the gravediggers of the European idea," the party's first secretary, Lionel Jospin, said on Monday after the rightwing newspaper Le Figaro forecast that 41 per cent of the electorate wanted a leftwing victory in the two rounds of voting starting on May 25, compared with 39 per cent who wanted the ruling rightwing RPR-UDF coalition to win. The remaining voters were either undecided or backed other opposition parties.

Although opinion polls have shown a swing to the Socialists during campaigning, French electoral rules, including the drawing of constituency boundaries, would still give a slight advantage in seats to the right, which has more than 480 of the 577 National Assembly seats. But a further small swing, possibly as little as 1 or 2 per cent, in some key marginals would ensure a narrow electoral victory for a leftwing government, four years after a rout in parliamentary polls.

In an interview with the regional Télégramme de Brest newspaper, Mr Jospin said France should be giving a lead on Europe, implying that Alain Juppé's government was lamely following the Germans.

The Socialist former prime minister, Laurent Fabius, was more explicit during a radio broadcast when he said that until now the government's only decision was to listen to the Germans and "shut up". He added: "The Germans are absolutely determined to have the single currency. For Chancellor [Helmut] Kohl this is the key to everything. Because it cannot be allowed to fail, this opens the possibility of in-depth discussions between friends."

Outlining Socialist priorities, including education, housing and tax reform, Mr Fabius said that one of the most urgent measures would be rapid negotiation on Europe. But another party leader, the former culture minister, Jack Lang, said it was scandalous and insulting to say that Mr Jospin was ready to sacrifice the higher interests of Europe for an electorate advantage.

Referring to Mr Juppé's allegations that the Socialist party leader had cooled on Europe to ensure an electoral partnership with the Eurosceptic Communists, Mr Lang said Socialists wanted more, not less, Europe. This would mean the government taking a stronger economic line to control and inspire the European Central Bank. "More Europe means a more social Europe, a more technological Europe and more Europe for young people," he added.

The strong Socialist showing in opinion polls has forced the conservative coalition to reconsider tactics. After the Elysée palace hinted that Mr Juppé might not be re-appointed even if the right is successful, campaign organisers are encouraging speculation on a possible successor.

A clearer picture will probably emerge after President Jacques Chirac intervenes in the election campaign this week in the hope of stopping the slide.

Le Monde, page 17

$25bn gold find a 'hoax'

John Aglionby in Jakarta and David Gow

IT WAS hailed as the biggest gold discovery in the world this century, worth $25 billion. But on Monday it turned out to be the biggest hoax of all time.

The Busang site, on the island of Borneo, Indonesia, far from containing the gold trumpeted by a small Canadian mining firm, is the scene of fraud on an unprecedented scale, an independent testing firm reported.

The mining consultants Strathcona Mineral Services Limited said samples taken last year from the site, run by the Canadian company Bre-X in the mountainous jungle of East Kalimantan, had been tampered with to boost their gold content.

In February, Bre-X said there were 71 million ounces of gold, worth $25 billion. On Monday Strathcona said the find was not even economically viable.

Two of Bre-X's leading partners, the New Orleans-based Freeport McMoran Copper and Gold, and the Indonesian conglomerate P T Nusamba, announced they would pull out. Nusamba is 80 per cent owned by President Suharto.

In a blunt letter to Bre-X's chairman, David Walsh, Strathcona's president, Graham Farquharson, said: "The magnitude of the tampering with core samples that we believe has occurred . . . is without precedent in the history of mining anywhere."

Strathcona, which described its results as "conclusive", did not blame anyone for the tampering.

Mr Walsh issued a statement saying his company was "devastated". But, in a fax from the Cayman Islands, John Felderhof, Bre-X's head of exploration, insisted there were significant amounts of gold: "I believe that eventually our work and our deposit in Busang will be confirmed."

Indonesia's minister of mines and energy, Ida Sudjana, said his government would take immediate and strong action as soon as it received the official report.

Mr Walsh spent his last $80,000 on an expiring land claim in the Kalimantan jungle in 1993. He and his wife made almost $64 million last year by selling some of their Bre-X shares. He defended his action by saying it was less than 3 per cent of his total stock.

Bre-X's collapse began in March, when Freeport cast doubts on the size of the mother lode. Two days earlier, Michael de Guzman, a Filipino who discovered the deposit, died after falling 250m from a helicopter.

World faces explosion of lifestyle illnesses

Chris Mihill

THE world is facing a huge increase in suffering and disability from cancer, heart disease and other lifestyle illnesses in the next 25 years, the World Health Organisation warned on Monday.

There will be a 33 per cent rise in lung cancers in women and a 40 per cent rise in prostate cancers in men in European Union countries alone by 2005, the WHO predicts.

Cancers are likely to double in most countries, with smoking, poor diet and an ageing population fuelling the rise.

Warning of "lifestyle plagues", the WHO's 1997 annual report states: "Dramatic increases in life expectancy, combined with profound changes in lifestyle, will lead to global epidemics of cancer and other chronic disease in the next two decades. The main result will be a huge increase in human suffering and disability. There is an urgent need to find ways to reduce that coming burden."

While infectious diseases are well under control in the industrialised world, societies face a growing toll from cancer, heart disease and strokes, mental disorders including dementia, chronic lung conditions and musculoskeletal problems such as arthritis.

But developing countries face the "double burden" of having to fight infectious diseases while being increasingly afflicted with the lifestyle illnesses seen in more affluent countries.

The report warns that heart disease and strokes, already leading causes of death in richer nations, will become far more common in poorer ones. Globally, cases of diabetes will more than double by 2025, and there will be a huge rise in some mental disorders, especially dementias.

The WHO calls for an "intensified and sustained" global campaign to encourage healthy lifestyles and attack the risk factors of many diseases: unhealthy diet, inadequate physical activity, smoking and obesity.

The report shows that circulatory diseases, such as heart attacks and strokes, kill 15.3 million people a year at present. Cancer in all its forms kills 6.3 million. Lung diseases, such as emphysema and bronchitis, kill 2.9 million. These add up to 24.5 million deaths, or 47 per cent of the annual global total of deaths from all causes.

Tobacco-related deaths, primarily from lung cancer and circulatory disease, amount to 3 million a year, or 6 per cent of total deaths, with smoking accounting for one in seven cancer cases worldwide. "If the trend of increasing consumption in many countries continues, the epidemic has many decades to run and will surely be judged by future generations to have been one of the greatest health tragedies in the history of mankind," the report states.

It says that in 2020, at least 15 million people worldwide will develop cancer, compared with 10 million cases annually now. In developing countries cases will double, and in industrialised nations they will increase by 40 per cent.

The number of diabetes sufferers worldwide is expected to rise from 135 million in 1995 to 300 million in 2025.

Today there are about 380 million people aged 65 or more, the report says. By 2020 the number is expected to exceed 690 million. Without good quality of life, extra years could turn into a penalty rather than a prize. Average global life expectancy is now 65 and in some countries is approaching 80.

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'Oxley Moron' woos middle Australia

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

PAULINE HANSON'S recently formed One Nation movement came of age last week. Two opinion polls showed that between 10 per cent and 25 per cent of Australian voters would support the independent MP's much vilified but apparently popular brand of anti-Aborigine, anti-Asian and anti-free trade rhetoric.

Suddenly the self-confessed "know-nothing" — who recently claimed in her book, The Truth, that Aborigines were cannibals — seemed to be acquiring the clout to win three seats and the all-important balance of power in the national senate in an election. The conspiracy theories of Hanson's book attribute almost all Australia's problems to the "new religion of internationalism, of anti-white racialism, multiculturalism, feminism and Asianisation".

In short, the former Queensland chip shop owner, who represents a seat called Oxley, near Brisbane, has galvanised enough who are disillusioned with mainstream politics to make her mark.

Other divisive issues such as the long-running debate on Aboriginal native title to the 40 per cent of Australia under pastoral leasehold have played right into her hands.

The polls indicate her support has spread far beyond the marginalised blue collar voters and rural outposts, and into middle Australia.

Ms Hanson is barnstorming the bush and attracting crowds of 1,000 people to fund-raising meetings. Within a fortnight of its founding, her One Nation movement had received more than 9,000 requests for membership.

New Zealand businessman John Lehmann, who runs a rightwing group, said he hopes to bring Ms Hanson to Auckland later this year to launch his anti-immigration Government Accountability League Party.

The Hanson factor, which was dismissed by most politicians after she was elected as an independent MP in March 1996 — after being dropped by the Liberal Party of the prime minister, John Howard, for allegedly racist remarks — shows no signs of abating.

It does not seem to matter that several hundred people have objected to the movement's application to register with the Australian Electoral Commission as a formal political party. The complainants object that One Nation's name is obscene, un-Australian and targets minorities.

Last year the newly-elected member for Oxley, known by her detractors as the Oxley Moron, made a maiden speech claiming that "reverse-racism" bankrolled Aborigines and multicultural groups at the expense of mainstream Australians.

For months Mr Howard, who had come to power promising a more comfortable and relaxed Australia where anything could be discussed, chose to ignore rather than criticise her. But the coalition Liberal-National Party government is worried that its traditional supporters are crossing over.

Last week the foreign minister, Alexander Downer, launched the broadside on Hansonism that many thought a year overdue. He said her policies to ban foreign investment and bring back racially discriminatory immigration policy would cripple Australia's relationship with Asia.

● Aborigines threatened to lobby for a boycott of Sydney's 2000 Olympic Games by black countries last week after Mr Howard backed miners and graziers in a bitter stand-off over land rights.

Report reveals atrocities in Matabeleland

David Beresford in Johannesburg

THE first comprehensive account has finally emerged of the atrocities perpetrated by Robert Mugabe's troops in Zimbabwe's southern province of Matabeleland after independence. The hideous story of how President Mugabe's Korean-trained troops quelled a rebellion in the early 1980s has come out in a report by the local Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.

The shock findings were presented to Mr Mugabe in March, but the country's eight Catholic bishops reneged on a pledge to release the study publicly. However, a copy has been obtained by the Guardian.

The report, based on testimony gathered by the commission from more than 1,000 people over a five-year period, sweeps aside a curtain of silence. The commission focused its investigation on two case-study areas, the Tsholotsho and Nyamandlovu districts in Matabeleland North and Matobo in Matabeleland South.

Matabeleland in the early 1980s was the centre of tensions between Joshua Nkomo's Zipra, the armed wing of the mainly Ndebele Zapu party, and Mr Mugabe's Zanla army, Zanu's armed wing. Tensions were exacerbated by a South African-backed destabilisation campaign. Dissidents carried out atrocities in the region but on a tiny scale compared with the state security forces.

In August 1981, 106 instructors arrived from North Korea and began training what was to be known as Five Brigade, or Gukurahundi — Shona for "the rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains". Made up mostly of Shona-speaking recruits from Zanla, wearing distinctive uniforms and armed with AK-47s, the crack unit was to terrorise Matabeleland. The government introduced curfews, journalists were prohibited from leaving the provincial capital, Bulawayo, and Five Brigade set to work.

The report says: "Within weeks of being mobilised at the end of January 1983 . . . Five Brigade was responsible for mass murders, beatings and property burnings in . . . Northern Matabeleland . . . Within the space of six weeks more than 2,000 civilians had died, hundreds of homesteads had been burnt and thousands of civilians had been beaten. Most of the dead were killed in public executions."

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The Bill and Tony show hits the road



The US this week

Martin Walker

ON THE morning after the British election, just before he rang Tony Blair to congratulate him on "a terrific win", President Bill Clinton had one question for aides who were marvelling with him at the scale of Labour's triumph. He wanted to know whether this also represented a defeat for the Eurosceptics, which would liberate Blair to follow Clinton's advice and move ahead fast to consolidate Britain's relations with Europe.

The advice was given when the two men met last year. Blair said he thought he would win, but he was not sure whether he would be able to move fast on the two issues Clinton had raised: Europe and Northern Ireland.

"We said it always makes sense to use your early momentum for the big things. Move fast, don't delay," recalled former national security adviser Tony Lake, who took part in the conversation with the Labour party leader. "And like every British friend, Tony Blair was left in no doubt that Britain's influence in Washington is the greater if Britain is a full player in Europe."

Beyond the geopolitics, and beyond the caution of public statements, there was an unprecedented mood of rejoicing in the administration. The office of Elaine Kamarck, senior adviser to Vice-President Al Gore, had the look of a Labour shrine, bedecked with Blair memorabilia.

For Clinton, the Blair victory represents the long-overdue chance to take what is still seen as a "special relationship" out of the hoary and sentimental grip of second world war and cold war intimacies, and to recast it into the future. This goes beyond the ideological sympathy between Blair and Clinton, and their skill in charting similar ways to modernise centre-left parties in order to win power again. It includes an embrace of the free-trading global economy, and a common emphasis on investing in education between two countries that Gore hails as "by far the most Internet-wired" of the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries.

The election has attracted extraordinary media interest in the United States, with Labour's victory the lead stories on the front pages of the Washington Post and New York Times. The news overwhelmed the formidable competition of a budget deal being reached between the White House and Congress, and the end of Donald Trump's latest marriage. Only the success of Boris Yeltsin in the Russian elections and the defeat of the Labour party in Israel last year attracted similar media attention.

There was also some pride in co-authorship among the centrists and modernisers in the Democratic party, particularly in the Democratic Leadership Council, the think-tank and lobby group that Clinton chaired in 1991 and used as the launch pad of his presidential campaign.

"I think it's terrific that the New Democrat and New Labour formula is clearly taking hold in all the democracies," Al From, DLC director, told me. "Since so much of what Blair has done was modelled on what we did with Bill Clinton in the early 1990s, I think you are going to see a very strong co-operation between the parties and the staffs. And I also hope this means that Britain will play a much stronger role in Europe."

Even such Republicans as Paula Dobriansky, Bob Dole's foreign policy adviser, were caught up in the mood. "Maybe it was time for a change of faces, but we don't see any policy change that will matter to us."

The only sour note came from British-born Tony Blankley, the adviser to Speaker Newt Gingrich. He said: "I just hope this doesn't mean Great Britain is going to dwindle into a kind of Denmark." And he questioned whether Blair's Britain would offer its bases for US air strike against terrorist targets in another country, as Margaret Thatcher offered for President Reagan's strike against Libya in 1985. But even Blankley noted with appreciation that Blair had copied the Gingrich technique of campaigning on a "Contract with America".

The speed with which Blair has become a familiar name on the US political scene is remarkable. When he was elected leader of the Labour party, the political junkies at the DLC in Washington began asking one another who on earth he was. Since the DLC is the main think-tank for Clintonism, their bafflement rather dented the fashionable myth of Bill and Tony replaying the Thatcher-Reagan role of transatlantic soul mates.

Blair is a lot better known in Washington today, thanks to the C-Span's cable channel's Sunday evening screening of parliamentary question time, to a long and flattering profile in the New Yorker, and to a rather less flattering portrait of him as a Clinton clone on "Sixty Minutes", the top-rated TV public affairs show.

The fact still remains that by far the best known of the new Labour team is the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, who has been making the rounds in Washington and Wall Street at least once and sometimes twice a year throughout the nineties. He has made himself a familiar figure at the US Treasury, at the International Monetary Fund, at the Federal Reserve and at the National Economic Council in the White House.

He reassured that most orthodox of central bankers, the Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, by revealing that he was a graduate of Edinburgh, which was (at least briefly) the home of Adam Smith. Since Greenspan views most British and all Europeans as unreconstructed Keynesians, this got their relations off to a good start.

"He gets it. He really gets it," confided Laura Tyson, who chaired Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers and then ran the National Economic Council, after she explained why Clinton had to ditch his initial public spending plans and attack the deficit instead.



Phoning around Washington in the wake of the British general election, I found nobody who could, off the cuff, name Labour's shadow spokesman for defence. And it was only in the specialised areas of the state department that the name of Robin Cook was familiar as the probable next foreign secretary.

"I don't think anybody gives a damn about Blair's foreign policy, so long as they are OK about enlarging Nato," commented one veteran Anglophile at the state department. "What is missing is any understanding of where Blair stands on institutional reform and on a common European defence and security policy, and whether he'll be taking anything to the Amsterdam summit except an attitude."

THE END of the cold war has fundamentally shifted the nature of the Anglo-American relationship. Defence and security are no longer central, even at a time when the main thrust of US foreign policy is to enlarge Nato into eastern Europe. Finance and commerce have replaced them, but within the particular context of Britain's role in Europe, and America's mounting and wary interest in the prospect of the euro, the European Union's planned single currency.

The concern of official Washington can be pinpointed to a precise moment in March when the IMF held a symposium on the euro, which convinced everybody that it was coming and that it would amount to a serious challenge to the dollar's primacy as the reserve currency. In the most talked-about presentation, Fred Bergsten of the Institute for International Economics estimated that eventually the euro will be the currency of choice for 30-40 per cent of global financial assets, with the dollar's role considerably diminished, to 40-50 per cent. This could imply as much as a trillion dollars being shifted from the US currency to the new euro, which could have an interesting impact on exchange rates in 1999, and thus on interest rates in what will soon be an election year in the US.

The prospect of the euro is thus revitalising America's traditional love-hate relationship with European integration. They started it with the Marshall Aid plan 50 years ago, and have more or less encouraged it ever since, even as they fret at Europe's protectionist instincts and France's occasional ambitions to make Europe into a rival superpower.

Hence Washington's overwhelming preference for Britain to be fully and unequivocally inside Europe, as the guarantor that Europe remains Atlanticist in outlook. And one of the main reasons for Brown's high profile in the Clinton administration has been to tell every American who will listen that a Labour government will be a good European.

"The message I am getting loud and clear in New York is that American companies — like Japanese firms such as Toyota — are increasingly worried about Britain's relations with the EU under the Tories, and that could damage hopes of US investment in Britain," Brown noted during a recent Wall Street visit. "There are 3.5 million jobs at risk from the Tories' stampede from Europe."

The Americans were delighted to be briefed on Labour's plans to speed the completion of Europe's single market. Stuart Bell, Labour's shadow trade secretary, had already sent to Brussels 150 pages of proposals of ways to do this. The core pledge was to speed up the schedule and complete the single market in the first half of next year, when Britain holds the rotating presidency of the EU. The Americans note with approval that the area where Blair is pledged to be most Euro-minded is in streamlining the free market. And they assume that the self-preservation instincts of the City of London will ensure that Britain joins a successful euro sooner rather than later.

The key adviser in all this is Jim Steinberg, deputy national security adviser, who was based in Britain for two years at the Institute of International Strategic Studies. A genuine expert on European issues, Steinberg is firmly convinced that European integration, with Britain at the heart of the process, is very much in US interests.

"Specifically, a politically integrated Europe will enhance European political stability, an integrated European market will help promote world economic growth and financial stability, and a more concerted European foreign and security policy can offer an alternative to US involvement when such involvement is not desired . . . Extending European membership to central and eastern Europe's developing democracies is critical," he wrote in An Ever-Closer Union, a book he published as he joined the Clinton administration.

This is the first time that a Labour prime minister has been elected to office in Britain without causing a touch of alarm in the US. Americans were baffled by Britain's decision to oust Winston Churchill and elect Clement Attlee in 1945, and the coming of Harold Wilson in 1964 was best described in a note from British ambassador David Ormsby-Gore to Harold Macmillan: "Unfortunately, those who have already met him dislike him, and those who have not distrust him. I don't think we are in for a very happy four days." Jim Callaghan, of course, inherited the prime ministership and was not elected by the British public.

Blair comes with the most thumping mandate of any Labour prime minister. But Clinton noted with a smile that Blair won only 44 per cent of the vote, a shade less than the 49 per cent Clinton secured last November.

Landless on the long march home

Last month a squatters' army ended a two-month march to the Brazilian capital to demand justice from the president. **John Vidal** joined them on the road

WE'VE BEEN marching north all day in the blazing sunshine behind a red flag and a crude bamboo cross. No left-right-left in boots and combat jackets — the Brazilian peasants' revolt is laid-back, wears ragged shorts and T-shirts and comes with the soft flip-flop-flip of plastic sandals on orange earth. This is the "Sem Terra", an army of landless people heading to the capital to see president Fernando Henrique Cardoso to demand urgent land reform. "*Reforma agrária*," shouts someone at the front of Brazil's Long March. It is echoed one kilometre back.

We — Antonio, Garcia, Luiz, Maria and 600 others, myself somewhere near the back of the line — are now 17 days south of Brasilia. The kilometre-long double file that left São Paulo six weeks ago is as orderly and good-humoured as a group of ramblers. We range in age from eight to 89; we are boisterous and pleased as punch with the recognition we are getting. Today we've walked a brisk 20km (no stops) from Uberlândia, but it will be many more hours before we camp. Hoes and scythes, machetes, bedrolls and cooking gear have gone before us on a truck. All we carry on this 1,000km trek are water bottles, *maté* gourds, tobacco and cutlery.

The Sem Terra is a highly-organised, mass social movement made up of Brazil's dispossessed — the croppers, casual pickers, farm labourers, and people thrown off the land by mechanisation and by land clearances. Some are homeless, some live in cities and others in roadside tents. Some are effectively slaves, earning less than a dollar a day. Five million families want the chance and the right to cultivate Brazil, the fourth largest country in the world.

Brazil vies with neighbouring Paraguay — Britain isn't far behind in the league table — for the title of the most unequally divided place on earth, with a land-tenure system that has barely changed since the Portuguese crown dealt out areas the size of modern countries to favoured families 400 years ago. Today, Brazil has a population of 165 million, yet fewer than 50,000 own most of the land in a country 66 times larger than Britain. At the other end of the scale, 4 million peasant farmers share less than 3 per cent of the land. Moreover, some 42 per cent of all privately-owned land in Brazil lies idle, not even grazed by cattle. Put another way, government figures show that the total arable land *not farmed* in Brazil exceeds the total land of any kind in all but 11 countries in the world. Unused land on the biggest farms — the *latifundios* — would, say Sem Terra, be enough for 3 million hungry peasant families to live on. Around 32 million people in Brazil — half the population of Britain — go hungry every day.

Everyone who joins the march gets blisters but now, with 17 days and just 300km to go, there's a spring in the step. The rains are almost over. Soon we will meet two other marches coming from the west and east. Priests are comparing this to the march out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Cars hoot their approval. So what if the president called them "retrograde primitives" when they set off in the rain from São Paulo? Now the going is easier. The talk is no longer of aching limbs, of places and people left behind, or even where we will spend the night, but of fundamentals. Rights.

Sem Terra targets the vast estates that lie mainly idle. It squats uncultivated land and then resettles people in massive numbers. It is strictly illegal, but the movement's leadership argues that it is merely speeding up the process of land reform. The right of government to redistribute land which is not being farmed has been enshrined in the Brazilian constitution for generations. But successive regimes have failed to make use of the right.

First, the movement's activists pore over maps and identify which land belongs to whom, where there are disputed or (frequently) illegal claims, and what land is best to occupy. It takes months to plan each invasion; each is minutely organised. People are trucked in, and they almost always catch the police and landowners off-guard. A squat is often violent. Hilda, who lives on a large Sem Terra settlement, describes her first land invasion: "We made an encampment in the area that had been chosen. We went on to the land at night. In the morning, the *fazendeiro* [ranchers] circled us in their tractors. Nobody was allowed in or left. Fifty two of us spent 17 days like this. We hadn't taken clothes. We dug a well . . . We had little food and what we had we gave to the children . . . The gunmen killed a little boy. No, we weren't afraid. When there are so many lives, you don't think about your own. Finally, the tractors left. There is always a happy ending. Two months later, we were officially settled."

But the story did not end there. Two years later, the former landowner passed straight over Hilda's house with a plane spraying pesticides. Hilda got her children inside but was drenched in poisons and lost 35 per cent of her sight. In the past few years, the scale of occupations by MST — Movimento Sem Terra, the Landless Movement — has escalated and the government has come under huge pressure to allocate land. In the past six years, MST has "occupied" 518 large ranches and resettled something like 600,000 people. Once on, they start farming, building houses and schools.

And as the big landowners have organised resistance by hiring a private army, so Sem Terra has found safety in ever larger squats. Serge is one of 2,500 people who occupied one massive farm in Pará state last April: "We walked 20km in the night. At 6am, we went in. It was like a party. Everyone was in teams, for security, health, food and so on. We knew what we had to do. Now we have 16,000 hectares. What does land mean to me? It means richness for everyone."

Sometimes the occupations end in tragedy. On April 17 last year, even as Serge and others were invading the estate in São Paulo state, 19 Sem Terra were shot by the police in the state of Pará. Many of the police were found to be in the pay of the landowners. No one has been arrested, even though the incident was recorded by television. The march on Brasilia is timed to arrive on April 17, the anniversary of the massacre.


Peasants prepare to occupy land in Paraná: an image by photographer Sebastião Salgado from his new book Terra (Phaidon Press, £35)

At 6.30pm, after 38km on the road, our ragged army runs down a steep slope to the tiny community of Mata Cachorro. Mata Cachorro — literally "Dead Dog Town" because of the innumerable canines that failed to cross the road — will talk about this invasion for years. All 30 Dead Dog inhabitants, it seems, have been co-opted to help in the village bar. Max, usually a farmworker, alone sells more beer in an hour than usually goes in a week. A samba group strikes up. Nearly 300m away, Dead Dog's football pitch is a campsite and hammocks and bedrolls are being laid out in four 70m-long binbag-plastic "tents".

JOÃO Pereira Mattos, who looks 60 but is 35, is not at the bar because he hasn't got a cent in the world. He is a *boas frias*, a casual worker from the south who has been picking sugar cane or vegetables since he was seven years old. He speaks for all the landless: "I have this dream of owning land. I think it every minute. I think it when I am walking, when I am working, when I am breathing. We wake up at 4am to take the truck. We come back at 9pm. I work to live; I earn $1 an hour. It's killing me. I don't earn enough to eat properly. There are millions like me. I am walking to get a better life."

João, like many on the march, has tried living in Brazil's cities. He went three times with his family, never finding work, always fearing for his life in the slums. He joined Sem Terra a year ago and has taken part in five land occupations since. Home now is a Sem Terra plastic shelter in an encampment beside a road. He may wait another year before he is given land on a settlement. "The march brings life," he says. "I've hoped for so long."

Antonio, from São Paulo, chips in: "I joined the march because I am waiting for land. I also live in a settlement by the road. Yes, it's hard to be away for so long, but what else is there? I am proud to march. How else will people remember us?"

Sem Terra has 220,000 members and is the largest popular movement in Brazil, enjoying the support of up to 90 per cent of the Brazilian population, according to one recent poll. Thanks partly to a sympathetic TV soap opera about the landless that was watched by more than 60 million people a night for six months, Sem Terra is becoming a mass movement, albeit without MPs. Sem Terra has gathered grassroots strength over the past 17 years and has evolved into a modern direct-action democracy movement, influenced as much by Gandhi as Che Guevara or Marx, and not content to sit back and wait for change.

The grassroots phenomenon has caught the politicians and the institutions unawares. As in northern countries, Brazil's politicians have all but given up on the very poor, barely addressing the growing inequalities in society. Sem Terra has taken hold unnoticed by the coalition of conservative and liberal groups that makes up the "neo-liberal" government; the unions — as ever fighting for jobs and workers' conditions — have picked up late on its significance; the modernising, liberal left has taken on the right's agenda and looked to business to rescue the country. Land reform is important, everyone agrees, but the landowners who control 180 of the 513 seats in Congress have retained their grip. Despite the huff and puff of all governments, including the military dictatorship that lost power in 1982, the concentration of land ownership has barely changed.

Sem Terra's strength is to have brought land reform out of the countryside and into the cities. This march — there have been others — is aimed at the heart of government. Sem Terra has forced what was a hidden issue — the landless — almost to the top of the political agenda.

You can feel the mood on the road. The landless are usually dismissed as vagabonds and troublemakers, but most towns en route have suspended social and political prejudice to give them a welcome, offering water, food and accommodation. Lawyers and community leaders have met us. We are applauded for pursuing a just cause.

Sitting near João is the Franciscan priest Fr José Alamiro Silva. He usually works with São Paulo street children, comes from a small farming family and says he was influenced by — and studied with — Leonardo Boff, the Brazilian priest who led the barefoot liberation theology movement of the 1960s. Boff fell foul of the Vatican and now teaches at Rio and Harvard universities.

But although Sem Terra was born out of the progressive church, the liberation theology and Marxism of the 1960s and 1970s, it has become something different, says Jose. The church, as always with social movements in South America, is divided over the Sem Terra. "It does not ignore the landless, but the progressives and the conservatives disagree on how to treat them."

Land ownership was only introduced in 1850, when the rich tightened its grip on the land to prevent hundreds of thousands of slaves, who were gaining their freedom at the time, from getting land. As a result, most freed slaves made their way to the cities. "All Brazil's problems are rooted in the inequity of land distribution over the centuries," says a Brasilia university environment professor on the march. "Environment, crime, human rights. They start here."

In the long tents — one for each of the four southern states that the marchers come from — the men from the far south snore "like oxen", those from the west "like chickens", says Ricardo as we fall sleep. That night, the young men of Dead Dog gallop their horses through the camp, riding bareback and wearing Sem Terra hats.

Next morning, we stand in circles sipping coffee brewed in a metal dustbin. Then we head for Little Dead Dog river, where 100 marchers have stripped and are cleaning clothes and bodies. A farmer has offered us milk by the litre. Silvio has found mushrooms, Jiro and Renato practise Thai boxing. Thirty-five couples have got together since the march started. Many now stroll hand in hand. Today we shall relax, not walk.

We look around. This is new country for most people here. We have crossed into Goiás state and the start of the *serrado*, or savanna. There are clouds of parakeets and flame trees; we glimpse giant lakes made by hydro-electric dams. The land is green. Soon it will turn to "soya country", vast agribusiness farms that employ next to no one, and export straight to Europe and the global economy.

The Sem Terra vision for the land is for small-scale farming, with land enough for families to support

continued on page 9

Unused land on the biggest farms would, say Sem Terra, be enough for 3 million hungry peasant families to live on. Around 32 million people in Brazil go hungry every day.

Continued from page 8

themselves. Massively unequal land distribution, they say, is a metaphor for the failure of democracy to improve the lives of the poorest. By extension, they argue, when the land and the resources are available for all, so is democracy. In particular Sem Terra seeks a shift away from farming for export to meeting the immediate needs of Brazilians.

In arguing that the land must be given to the masses, Sem Terra echoes the progressive farm and environment lobbies in Europe and the United States. Just as in Britain, millions of Brazilians were thrown out of work by the "green revolution", when farming was mechanised and intensified. It was one of the state's most anti-democratic, anti-social moves, they say.

But Sem Terra is not against technology — its settlements have tractors, combine harvesters, trucks, whatever it needs to survive. It argues that most research has gone into large-scale farming, and a technology appropriate for small farmers must be developed. A United Nations report shows that, hectare for hectare, Sem Terra settlements can be three or four times as productive as the big farms.

TO THE big landowners of the Paranapanema region, 800km to the southwest, the Sem Terra flag and its co-operatives, schools and settlements spell the end for Brazil. These people, say the landowners, are Commies, Zapatistas, Sandinistas, Shining Path, Tupac Amaru and Russkies rolled into one.

This is beef country and we are sitting in an office in the small town of Presidente Prudente with Roosevelt Roque dos Santos, a politician and farmer, and Antonio Prata, a large landowner. There are, says Roosevelt, who is the founder of the rightwing Rural Democratic Union (UDR), hundreds of millions of cattle in the region and 12 refrigerating plants — which, a local newspaper executive tells us, is exactly why the region is economically backward, because ranching cattle provides little work.

If there is to be a showdown between landlord and landless, it may be in this region. The landowners are arming themselves even as the Sem Terra are poised in camps to invade in large numbers. Sem Terra wants to settle 25,000 families in this, one of Brazil's most fertile regions. Their case is helped because there is legal confusion over land ownership. Sem Terra say the landowners stole the land from the state 100 years ago. The landowners show their titles. They are forged, reply Sem Terra.

Antonio has four large farms with 10,000 cattle. To avoid accusations of not using his land, he says he is about to double the numbers of cattle. He employs 50 people — one man for every 400 acres — and says that last year Sem Terra tried to invade his son's land. Antonio, a cousin and a friend went out and shot at them. Not to kill, he assures us. No one was hurt. It was quite legal to defend himself, he says. He employs six "outsiders", has armed them with pistols, semi-automatics and cameras, and they patrol around the clock. Every farmer in Paranapanema is doing the same, he says. "MST is an international movement. Someone wants to undermine Brazilian agricultural production."

The UDR, which was disbanded several years ago, is now re-forming to handle the Sem Terra threat. Roosevelt says it has 18,000 members across Brazil. Landowners pay according to size and head of cattle. He says Sem Terra is no longer a social movement because it is engaged in criminal activities. Brazil, he says, "is faced with revolutionary communists dedicated to overthrowing the state". Roosevelt, who is a trained lawyer, offers three bits of evidence. Item one is a little red Sem Terra booklet called How To Organise The Masses. It is, he says, straight from Nicaragua or Cuba and it lists, among other things, "vices" that the movement's leaders and militants should beware of: "individualism", "egoism", "spontaneity", "anarchism", "conformism", "cynicism", "adventurism", "self-sufficiency" and "subjectivism".

Item two is a document called The Revolutionary Method Of Leadership In The Sandinistas, which Roosevelt says was found by the police in a settlement in 1994. Item three is more interesting, coming straight from police files: 400-odd criminal charges brought against Sem Terra members in this one region. They include "invasions", "slaughter of cattle", "disobedience", "attempted abortion", "suicide", "incitement", "fires", "threats", "having guns" and "false ideology". None, he admits, has been brought to trial. He will not talk about his links with the police.

But there's more. Roosevelt repeats the allegations, made in a far rightwing Latin American periodical, that Sem Terra's paymasters are Europe's most respected charities. The Catholic Church has a secret slush fund that channels money to them, he says. He can't say how it operates or how much is given. Sem Terra says that no more than 5 per cent of its money is from overseas. Almost all comes from a two per cent income tax that it levies on its members.

We sum up Roosevelt's charges. "Are you saying that Christian Aid, Oxfam, the Catholic Institute for International Relations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Anti-Slavery International, all of whom send money to Sem Terra, are secretly plotting the overthrow of the Brazilian government?"

Roosevelt: "Correct".

What will happen if nothing is done?

Roosevelt: "Sem Terra will be responsible for the end of democracy in Brazil."

Christian Aid — which has supported Sem Terra for a decade — says that it is proud to work with the movement. "Land reform is enshrined in the Brazilian constitution. We're helping the poor help themselves," says a spokesman.

The government, grappling with democracy after years of dictatorship, smiles awkwardly and backpedals hard. Land reform, festering for years, has become a hot issue. President Cardoso is caught between the powerful landowning interests and the populism of Sem Terra and is making conciliatory noises. But Incra, the government department that deals with land reform, has neither the money nor the habit of effecting quick change. Besides, Sem Terra does not just want land, but schools, hospitals, and roads. Its agenda is increasingly broad as it makes links with unions and other groups and takes on issues such as the homeless, indigenous peoples and crime.

Incra admits that Sem Terra settlements are the best organised in Brazil, with high productivity and strong diversity. Dr Abdias Vilar de Carvalho, Incra's number two, recognises the political danger of supporting a social movement that might potentially bring his government down: "We don't agree with everything that Sem Terra does, nor their politics, but we do agree with their general aims."

Sem Terra claims to have no leaders, but this is as much for security reasons as ideological. Apart from an elected "central direction" of 22 (paid) people, everything is left to decentralised state organisations and their "militants". These activists, who are Sem Terra's public face, are styled on barefoot priests — going into communities, factories and workplaces spreading the word.

They can resemble a revivalist church. One of Sem Terra's main tools for attracting people is what it calls "mysticism" — which it describes as "a way to express the joy, the desire that we feel when we participate in the activities of Sem Terra". It involves militants shouting slogans, singing and chanting. They often read and study together in groups. Indeed the movement uses many church rituals and lets the language of faith and politics mix freely.

Sem Terra argues that the source of its mysticism is "creativity", and it urges militants to "praise good workers", to "provide supportive symbolism", and "set an example as members of the settlement". It is also suggested that, since the militants are examples for the rest of society, they should pay close attention to their personal cleanliness, health and dress. "The language is sometimes Stalinist, but it does not have the same connotations as in Europe," says an academic.

We have walked on from Dead Dog. At kilometre 704, a farmer offers us a pig. Shy horsemen give us discreet thumbs-up signs. A thousand cars and lorries carrying vegetable oils and soya, bureaucrats or families from the north hoot their approval.

The leader of an alliance of unions representing 18 million workers has walked with us and — to cheers and songs — said that Sem Terra is the most important movement in Brazil. The American commentator Noam Chomsky has said Sem Terra may be the most important grassroots social movement in a world where the left is deeply confused about direction and path.

Three more hours and there's a warm driving rain. We have walked 20km over what, 100 years ago, was forest. Now there are acacia, mangoes and sucupira trees with cattle beneath them. Ana, an eight-year-old, leads the march. The mining town of Castalao has lent us its stadium and we set up camp and queue for beans and rice.

Mario and Miguel scrub themselves hard in the showers. They both want to be settled, both have visions of living in "ecological" communities with people sharing food, eating and working together, with each family given just a little money at the end of the week. Miguel is fed up with the UDR shooting at him. "I ask them, why don't you sell your land? Why do you need so much? Could we not live in peace together?" Luiz joins them. He thinks people should work both communally and individually.

But Sem Terra raises far wider issues than farming, both for Brazil and the West, says Moema de Miranda Valerelli, of the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis in Rio de Janeiro (Ibase), which is funded partly by groups such as Christian Aid. "We have a society that is learning to be democratic," she says. "People understand that it is no good leading the world in economics or exporting everything if half our people are dying of hunger. There is a greater understanding that economic issues should be a way of gaining social development."

Moema argues that land reform is not just for the rural areas but is being re-interpreted as fundamental for the cities. "When we had quick development in the cities, it seemed the countryside was backward . . . Now Brazil is waking up and seeing the reality: that most people in the cities are very poor, and very distant from modernity and democracy. Sam Terra shows that land reform is possible. It gives a real future to the rural and urban poor — something the government and political parties have failed to do. It truly speaks for the poor," she says.

The lessons of Sem Terra for other grassroots democracy movements are legion, says Moema: "What is pushing people away from democracy everywhere?" she asks. "Inequality. And where do we see most inequality? Always on the land. The red flag of the Sem Terra is a metaphor for grassroots democracy."

You can see the shining, modernist city of Brasilia from across the great plain that surrounds it. From a distance it could just be a promised land, an artificial city developed to commemorate the power of the monolithic state. Oscar Niemeyer's towers and blocks, the wide avenues, the lakes, were the vision of another generation.

WHEN Sem Terra, the modern state's children, arrive and link with two other marches of the landless coming from east and west, it is to a hero's welcome. Around 120,000 people line the streets. Unions have bused in their members to walk with them. Brasilia is given the day off. Gays, transvestites, metalworkers, teachers, civil servants join in. Children lay bread and fruit out on the pavements. Press helicopters drone overhead. Tickertape floats from the windows of giant office blocks.

The government reads the situation carefully. Four presidents — of the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, the Supreme Court and the Republic — greet the marchers. Measures are announced to speed up land reform. Out of the blue, the World Bank announces loans worth $400 million for land reform. Special credit lines are opened for new settlements. More ranches are hurriedly confiscated, some specifically to settle the survivors of last year's massacre in the state of Pará.

It is an event. It looks like a glorious reward for eight weeks of marching. But, in the midst of the relief and the celebrations, Sem Terra are guarded. "We will believe them when they put their promises into practice," says one of the march leaders, who has heard too many funeral orations and too much rhetoric from politicians. "There have been thousands of promises. We have been continually betrayed."


A marcher raises the Sem Terra's red standard in front of a squatter camp PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN VIDAL

John Vidal's book, McLibel: Burger Culture On Trial is published by Macmillan, £15.99

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Flag-waving supporters offer an exuberant greeting to Tony Blair as he makes his way through the gates to Downing Street PHOTO: MARTIN GODWIN

Triumphant Blair ends Labour's exile

Michael White

TONY BLAIR swept into Downing Street last week on the crest of an historic Labour wave which delivered him a record majority of 179 seats and the Tories their most humiliating electoral defeat since 1906.

John Major, the outgoing prime minister, immediately quit as leader of a broken Conservative party.

Foreign secretary Malcolm Rifkind, defence secretary Michael Portillo, Michael Forsyth and Ian Lang, all potential Tory leaders of cabinet rank, were among the spectacular casualties of the most extraordinary political landslide of modern times.

A crushing victory in the last British election of the 20th century pushed Mr Blair relentlessly to a decisive mandate for his brand of centre-radicalism — at 43 the youngest prime minister since 1812.

With "time for a change" tactical voting delivering significant gains to the Liberal Democrats in Labour's slipstream, the Tories came close to a freefall. It meant that many of the familiar landmarks of the two-party British system could be swept away — the legacy of years of reckless Conservative disarray and decay.

One unmistakable symptom of the electorate's determined rejection of the Tories came at 2.45am in Tatton where Neil Hamilton, who faces allegations of sleaze, was decisively beaten by the BBC journalist Martin Bell, standing as an independent, *(see James Lewis, page 12)*.

Mr Blair is Labour's fifth prime minister and the first to win an election since Harold Wilson in 1974, the year in which Mr Blair first voted.

Tory grandees visibly winced on television as the scale of the defeat sank in. The recriminations and the leadership jockeying began instantly, with moderates blaming "rank treachery on the right" against Mr Major.

David Hunt, former cabinet moderate, was the first heavyweight to fall. David Mellor lost in Putney — by more than Sir James Goldsmith's 1,518 anti-European votes — and then Mr Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, became the first cabinet victim in Stirling. Mr Lang followed. The Conservatives were completely wiped out in Scotland and Wales.

If there was a consolation for Mr Major, as he faced up to being the worst Tory loser since Arthur Balfour in 1906, it was that his Eurosceptic tormentors were among the biggest losers.

But it was Mr Blair's night, an extraordinary vindication of his single-minded drive for power since succeeding John Smith in 1994. In an emotional address to local loyalists, the new Prime Minister thanked friends and family, above all his elderly father. He said: "I feel this evening a deep sense of honour, a deep sense of responsibility and a deep sense of humility. You have put your trust in me and I intend to repay that trust.

"If we have done well, I know what this is, a vote for the future. It is not a vote for outdated dogma or ideology of any kind, a vote for the end of division . . . for a desire to apply the basic British values of common sense and imagination to the problems we know we face."

Mr Blair ended Labour's long exile from power with a triumphant entry into Downing Street last Friday morning and set the stage for a savage leadership contest within the depleted Tory ranks.

The contrast between Labour elation and utter Tory dismay produced wildly contrasting scenes as Mr Blair and his family were mobbed by well-wishers in the streets of London.

In an emotional address outside his new front door Mr Blair praised his defeated rival's dignity and courage and promised to govern pragmatically "in the interests of all our people" for the next five years. "This is not a mandate for dogma or for doctrine," he said.

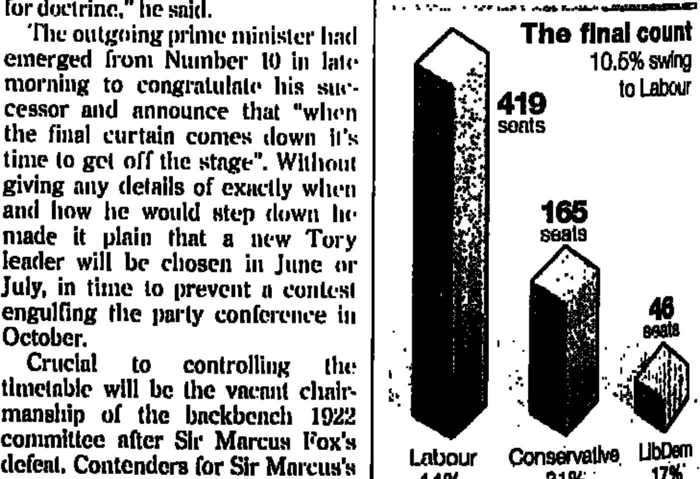
The outgoing prime minister had emerged from Number 10 in late morning to congratulate his successor and announce that "when the final curtain comes down it's time to get off the stage". Without giving any details of exactly when and how he would step down he made it plain that a new Tory leader will be chosen in June or July, in time to prevent a contest engulfing the party conference in October.

Crucial to controlling the timetable will be the vacant chairmanship of the backbench 1922 committee after Sir Marcus Fox's defeat. Contenders for Sir Marcus's post include Sir Archie Hamilton, almost certainly an ally of John Redwood, Tom King, possibly Sir Peter Tapsell, and the Tory MP for Chelsea Alan Clark, who backs Michael Howard.

But Kenneth Clarke became the first of Mr Major's potential heirs to declare his candidacy. In the hunt for scapegoats the pro-European Mr Clarke was top of the list among rightwing MPs and ex-MPs. He had, however, the consolation of surviving the bloodbath which claimed the seats of seven cabinet colleagues, including two would-be leadership candidates, Mr Portillo and Mr Rifkind.

As the final results were declared — with Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness getting elected in Northern Ireland — Labour emerged with 44 per cent of the vote and 419 seats, the highest number in its history, as well as the highest number of women MPs, more than 100. The Tories slumped to 31 per cent and 165 seats after losing an astonishing 177, while the Lib Dems lost votes but gained seats thanks to tactical voting. They ended up with 46 seats, including true-blue Winchester, snatched by just two votes in the last declaration of the campaign — the final insult to 18 years of Tory power.

Most politicians agreed that Britain is entering uncharted waters after such a ballot box upheaval. The Tory wipe-out in Wales and Scotland, many predicted, makes resistance to devolution all but impossible. Top Scots Tories were already urging its acceptance as part of what must be a painful Conservative reconstruction.



Britain awakes to an impossible dream

COMMENT
Matthew Engel

THIS was our Velvet Revolution, and the population went wild, British-style. Last Friday morning people were seen breaking into half-smiles in public while reading the papers; some thought about making eye contact in the Tube; others even considered talking to complete strangers, then remembered themselves and drew back.

After all, almost one adult in five had missed the mood sufficiently to vote Conservative, and it was remotely possible that you could meet someone willing to admit it.

The extent of Labour's landslide meant that comparisons with 1945 were inevitable. But there was no repetition of the remark attributed to the lady diner at the Savoy as news of Clement Attlee's triumph filtered through: "But this is terrible. They have elected a Labour Government, and the country will never stand for that."

The Savoy seemed calm at lunchtime, and the expensively suited young men in the restaurant were probably all employed by the Labour party anyway.

Mr Attlee could never have entered Downing Street with one-hundredth of the studied triumphalism of Tony Blair, or one-thousandth of his élan.

The new Prime Minister did not quite go for the full Roman emperor's option. He omitted to drape himself in a purple toga, dragging the defeated general in chains behind his chariot. His symbolism experts must have lost their nerve on that one.

Instead, the new Prime Minister progressed on foot from the Thatcher Memorial Gates to No 10, working a cheering throng, who had all been given security clearances, flags and — in some cases — placards with suspiciously similar handwriting. The ones I spoke to had come from places as far afield as Labour's campaign headquarters at Millbank and the central office at Walworth Road. Spontaneous enthusiasm works best if you leave nothing to chance.

This was the *pièce de résistance* of Labour's campaign show, the final celebratory burst of electoral fireworks. At least one hopes it is. There is a lingering suspicion that the next five years could be like this. It worked all right for Kennedy, Reagan and Clinton; and Blair is the first British leader charismatic enough to make the comparisons sensible.

When he reached the podium outside No 10 he refrained from quoting Francis of Assisi, as Mrs Thatcher did, and he certainly did not get spattered with paint like Ted Heath.

He said he would lead "a government of practical measures in pursuit of noble causes". Then he said there had been enough talking. "It is time now to do." But it wasn't. It was time for another photo-opportunity. The children posed charmingly, and Tony and Cherie hugged and waved, and hugged again.

Finally, the door shut behind them, and the Prime Minister began that mystical process of governance of which he — until that moment — know as little as the rest of us.

John Major once said he was told things the moment he went into No 10 that he did not know even after being Chancellor and Foreign Secretary. Now Mr Blair has been let into whatever darkness lies at the heart of the state.

The rest of us meanwhile tried to come to terms with the magnitude of what had occurred. It was not easy. At 1.47am last Friday the Lib Dems' Paddy Ashdown was saying it looked as though there was going to be a change of government. Five minutes earlier BBC1 had flashed up "Labour gain Hove".

"Sometimes," says the Queen in Alice Through The Looking Glass, "I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Last week we all had to believe dozens of impossible things before breakfast. I am convinced there was a moment when Ian Lang was about to say it was only a mid-term blip. But it really has happened. The long years of Toryism are history.

John Major was driven away from Downing Street in a Jaguar, which appeared to be leaking oil rather alarmingly.

Outside Downing Street, London looked as it always does on a warm spring day: more frazzled than sunlit. The West End was clogged with traffic, and there were beggars in the Strand. You can't blame the Government. Not yet. Reality will intrude soon enough.

But for one shining moment everything does seem bright and new again. Please God, don't let Labour ruin it.

Read more about the new Labour Government on the Guardian and Observer Election Website: http://election.guardian.co.uk

Left feels squeeze in Blair's Cabinet

Rebecca Smithers

CIVIL servants returned to work on Tuesday to face new teams of ministers, including a record five women in top jobs, appointed by Tony Blair.

John Prescott has taken over as Deputy Prime Minister and Environment, Regions and Transport Secretary. His workload is increased by the daunting task of combining the deputy prime ministership with a clutch of heavyweight portfolios.

Installed in the Treasury as Chancellor of the Exchequer is Gordon Brown, determined to be a hands-on Iron Chancellor. His sidekick is the new Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Alistair Darling, a 43-year-old Edinburgh-based lawyer who held the same post in opposition without putting a foot wrong.

Fellow Scot Robin Cook, aged 51, is Mr Blair's Foreign Secretary, and looks set to be one of the Cabinet's leading Eurosceptics. His swift absorption of the lengthy Scott report underlined his reputation as one of the brightest minds in Mr Blair's top team.

Mr Blair appointed Lord Irvine of Lairg, aged 57, as Lord Chancellor, sealing a relationship which began 20-odd years ago when Mr Blair joined Derry Irvine's chambers.

Jack Straw, aged 50, is the Home Secretary. He has been labelled more rightwing than his predecessor, Michael Howard.

David Blunkett enters the history books as the first blind cabinet minister, assuming the tough portfolio for education and employment.

The Scottish Secretary is Donald Dewar, aged 59, who has the key task of steering Labour's controversial plans for a Scottish parliament through the Commons. Previously Labour's chief whip, the engaging Scot is highly regarded by Mr Blair.

Bumped out to make way for Mr Dewar is George Robertson, the 51-year-old centre-right Scottish trade unionist, who moves to become Defence Secretary.

Also moved after frequent clashes over budgets with Gordon Brown is Chris Smith, aged 45, who becomes Heritage Secretary — a demotion from health and social security, which he shadowed. Also demoted was Jack Cunningham, who was switched from shadowing heritage to Agriculture Minister.

One of the surprise promotions was that of Frank Dobson to Health Secretary, with responsibility for one of the most high-profile and high-spending portfolios. His fellow "Old Labourite", Michael Meacher, is to be Environment Minister, but was demoted from the Cabinet.

Another unexpected switch and apparent demotion was that of 53-year-old Gavin Strang to Transport Minister. Mr Strang, largely seen to have failed in tackling the Tory government on BSE, will now be relegated to working with Mr Prescott.

Of the five women appointed to the Cabinet, three of them have ministerial experience. One is Margaret Beckett, aged 54, the new Trade and Industry Secretary. Another is 49-year-old Ann Taylor, the new Leader of the Commons.

Marjorie "Mo" Mowlam, the new Northern Ireland Secretary now recovering from a brain tumour, inherits the task of trying to kick-start all-party talks and has potentially one of the toughest jobs.

Clare Short, the 51-year-old controversial leftwinger and a former civil servant, makes it to the Cabinet as International Development Secretary. And the new Social Security Secretary is 46-year-old Harriet Harman, the portfolio she has shadowed for the past year — albeit with a more knowledgeable "minder" in the form of Frank Field.

The new Welsh Secretary is Ron Davies, aged 50, who starts his job with the satisfaction of having helped to wipe the Tories off the Welsh map.

The much-coveted job of Minister for Europe goes to Doug Henderson. He has been a shadow home office minister and impressed both Jack Straw and Tony Blair with his grip on details.

Peter Mandelson, mastermind of Labour's election campaign, will also have a pivotal role in the Blair administration, responsible for co-ordinating and presenting government policies from the vantage point of a seat on all key cabinet committees.

Designated Minister Without Portfolio, he is not a member of the Cabinet and has no Whitehall department of his own, but he could become more influential, and potentially more powerful, than many senior ministers. He will be attached to the Cabinet Office and liaise with the Downing Street Policy Unit.

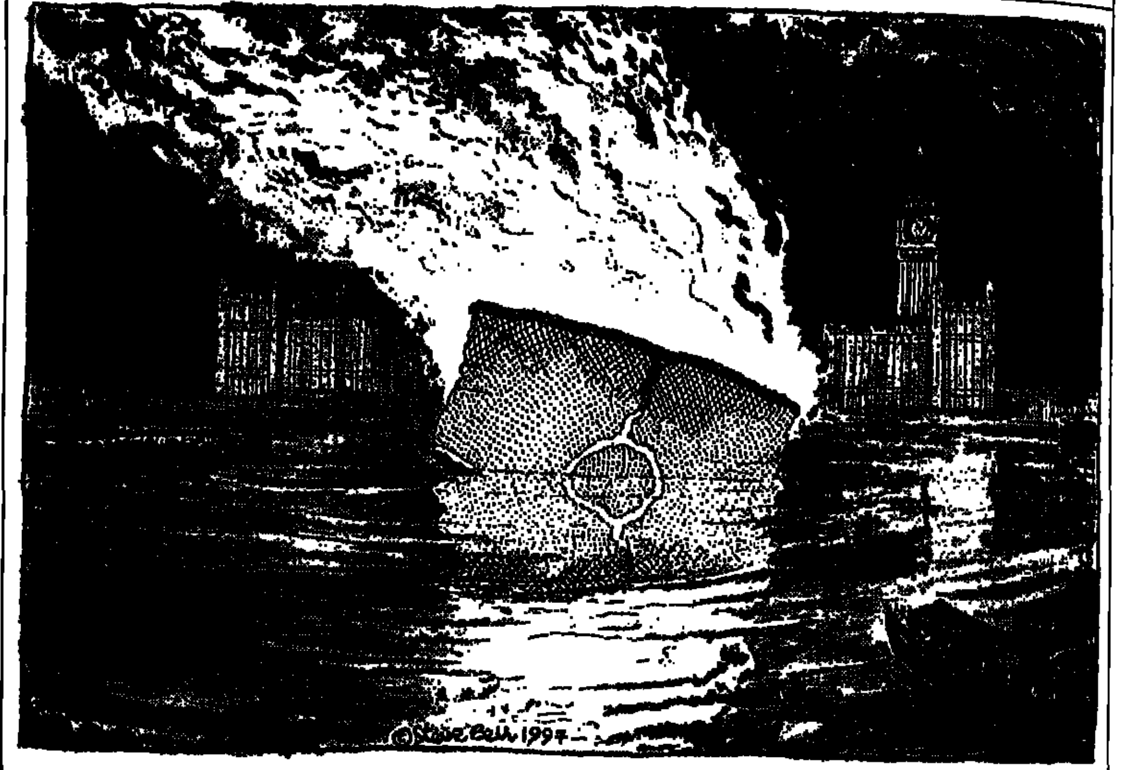
In many ways Mr Mandelson will take on the mantle of Michael Heseltine, deputy prime minister in John Major's government. He will oversee the work of task forces made up of hand-picked civil servants seconded to a strengthened Cabinet Office at the heart of the Whitehall machine. Mr Mandelson will also play a key role in presenting to the party and the public what the administration is doing.

The Cabinet

Prime Minister	Tony Blair, 44
Deputy Prime Minister	John Prescott, 58
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Gordon Brown, 46
Foreign Secretary	Robin Cook, 51
Home Secretary	Jack Straw, 50
Lord Chancellor	Lord Irvine, 56
President of the Board of Trade	Margaret Beckett, 54
Education & Employment	David Blunkett, 49
Health	Frank Dobson, 57
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Scotland	Donald Dewar, 59
Defence	George Robertson, 51
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Agriculture	Jack Cunningham, 57
Wales	Ron Davies, 50
National Heritage	Chris Smith, 45
International Development	Clare Short, 51
Chief Secretary, Treasury	Alistair Darling, 43
Leader of the Commons	Ann Taylor, 49
Leader of the Lords	Lord Richard, 64
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Minister Without Portfolio	Peter Mandelson, 43
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Paymaster General	Geoffrey Robinson, 58
Ministers of State at Treasury	Helen Liddell, 46
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Chief Whip	Nick Brown, 46
Social Security Minister	Frank Field, 54
Environment Minister	Michael Meacher, 57
Heritage Minister	Tom Clarke, 56
Public Service Minister	Derek Foster, 60
Education and Employment Minister	Andrew Smith, 46



Poll watch James Lewis

Bell tolls for Hamilton in Tatton

THERE WAS no Labour landslide in the Cheshire constituency of Tatton. But the battle that saw the ousting of its Tory MP, Neil Hamilton, was also a famous victory for voters who put party politics aside and pronounced, collectively, that "Enough is enough".

Tatton was one of the safest Tory seats in the land and, in 1992, Mr Hamilton had a rock-solid majority of more than 21,000. That was why his local party adopted him again, even though his reputation was under a cloud over the "cash-for-questions" affair. They took it for granted that "our people" would back him regardless.

It was an assumption too far. The indignant Labour and Liberal Democrat parties withdrew their candidates and rallied round Martin Bell, a distinguished BBC war correspondent, whom they invited to stand as an independent "anti-sleaze" candidate. Mr Bell also won the support of many disaffected Tories and romped home with a majority of more than 11,000.

The man dismissed by Tories as "a mere hack" had been warned by the litigious Mr Hamilton that anyone who so much as mentioned sleaze would be at the receiving end of a writ. Col Bob Stewart, an old friend of Mr Bell's from the Bosnian front, found a way round that problem by citing, from army regulations, the catch-all offence of "conduct unbecoming" to level at Mr Hamilton.

It was not a fierce campaign so much as a spontaneous local uprising against Mr Hamilton, the force of which seemed at times to overwhelm Mr Bell, who never really intended to fight at all. The idea at the outset was that the mere threat of his candidacy would force the Tories to replace Mr Hamilton with someone more acceptable. But the incumbent chose to brazen it out.

So, for the first time in many years, the Commons will have an Independent MP, who says he will serve the full five-year term. Before long the House is due to hear a report by Sir Gordon Downey, the Commissioner for Standards, on his investigation of the allegations against Mr Hamilton and others. But there were suggestions this week that the report may never be published because Parliament can have no jurisdiction over MPs who have lost their seats.

ELECTIONS that result in a change of government usually mean that most of the displaced ministers reappear on the Opposition front benches. This time many are gone from the Commons, some of them for good.

Perhaps the most notable casualty was the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, who had been regarded as a candidate of the right for the Tory leadership. A victim of tactical voting at Enfield, he would say only that he "might be back one day".

The most important victim of the Conservative wipe-out in Scotland was the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, who also had an eye on the party leadership. Two others defeated at the hands of Scottish voters were Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, and Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, who said he was standing down from political life.

William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, succumbed to a 12 per cent swing to Labour in Bristol West, while Tony Newton, the Leader of the Commons and a Major loyalist, was swept away in Braintree, Essex.

The search for a seat by Norman Lamont, the embittered former Chancellor, came to an end when tactical voting delivered genteel Harrogate to the Liberal Democrats. And David Mellor, a former Heritage Secretary, lost his seat at Putney, where his only satisfaction was in seeing the humiliation of his opponent Sir James Goldsmith, founder of the Referendum party, who lost his deposit.

Lesser but still substantial figures to lose their seats were David Hunt, a former Welsh Secretary; and Sir Marcus Fox, the voice of backbench Tories as chairman of the influential 1922 Committee.

THE TURNOUT for the election was down by seven percentage points compared with 1992. But the 78 per cent turnout in 1992 was particularly high because the contest between John Major and Neil Kinnock was considered to be so close. It is thought to have fallen to 71 per cent this time because opinion polls suggested the outcome was not in doubt.

More than a million Tory voters switched straight across to Labour. Another 2 million, who backed Mr Major in 1992, withdrew their support this time but could not bring themselves to vote for any other party. As a result, Labour's own vote went up by 2 million to a 40-year record of 13.5 million.

SINN FEIN, the political wing of the IRA, scored two gains, in Mid-Ulster and West Belfast. But neither of the victors — the party's president, Gerry Adams, and its chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness — is likely to take up his seat at Westminster.

Sinn Fein now holds as many Westminster seats as Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists, and is breathing down the neck of the moderate Social Democratic and Labour party.

Mr Adams said his party was ready to do business with the new Government and claimed that Mr Blair's majority was big enough to unlock him from the grip of the Unionists. But London and Dublin have always agreed that the minimum price for Sinn Fein entry to the Stormont peace talks is a restored IRA ceasefire.



Lib Dems make great gains

Rebecca Smithers

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT leader Paddy Ashdown hailed his party's success in the general election as a landmark in its history, and pledged to make it the most "constructive" voice of opposition.

The Liberal Democrats more than doubled their representation in the Commons, by 27 seats to take their total up to 46, even though their overall vote was 1 point down on the 18 per cent gained in 1992. That gave them the highest number of seats for a third party since 1929, as they took almost the whole of Cornwall and other seats in their Southwest battleground, and made unexpected gains elsewhere, including the dramatic capture of Winchester after two recounts. In Scotland, with the wipe-out of the Tories, they are now the main party of opposition.

Mr Ashdown told a Westminster press conference: "This election has delivered a great step forward for the Liberal Democrats. We have advanced in every part of Britain, gaining seats in Scotland, Yorkshire, the North West, the North East, the Midlands, East Anglia, London, the South and the South West. We are of course the second party of local government. We now become the challengers as well in a number of other seats where we only just missed.

"The Conservatives have suffered an electoral catastrophe of earthquake proportions. No doubt they will understand the injustice of the first-past-the-post electoral system."

As well as winning a series of key Tory marginals on its target list, tactical voting helped sweep the party to victory in "no-hope" constituencies such as Northavon, near Bristol.

Strategists insisted that there had been no "turning point" in the Lib Dems' campaign, but that the result was achieved by concentrating their efforts on around 50 key seats, and sticking to policies such as health and education.

The party's campaigns chief, Lord Holme, said three things that would now disappear from the Lib Dems' "political lexicon": the concept of a "wasted vote"; voters' claims that they do not know where the Lib Dems stand on policies; and the argument that the party only wants proportional representation because it cannot win without it. "We still want to change the electoral system, but we have proved we can win without it," said Lord Holme.

Mr Ashdown said the Liberal Democrats as an opposition force would be "constructive in that we will seek to work with Labour on those issues where there's common ground, and where it's clearly in the national interest to do so, such as devolution of real power to the nations of Scotland and Wales, the reform of our outdated electoral system and the transformation of our political institutions."

Patrick Wintour adds: The Lib Dems achieved the biggest third-party breakthrough since the second world war but when they assemble for their largest Westminster meeting for 45 years, many Lib Dem MPs will still be asking if 46 seats are good enough.

It may seem an extraordinary question — but the party's share of the vote fell for the third successive election, from 26 per cent in 1983, 23.1 per cent in 1987 and 18.3 per cent in 1992 to 16.7 this time.

Targeting — and implicitly encouraging anti-government tactical voting — was the key to the campaign. Almost all its election spending went into 50 target seats. The party's growing local government presence also gave it a new base of activists to campaign with. It worked superbly. The Southwest, the party's golden triangle, produced a massive crop of seats and progress in Scotland was better than expected.

But Mr Ashdown is now asking himself what is his party's role in the new Parliament, given Labour's huge majority. He believes that, if Mr Blair decides to push through pro-European legislation, he may yet need to rely on Liberal Democrat support, if only to overcome divisions within his own party.

Clare Short (left) and Harriet Harman at No 10 PHOTO: GARY CARLTON

Women MPs top 100

Clare Longrigg

THE culture of the House of Commons is set to undergo a radical overhaul as the number of women MPs doubles, senior female Labour figures said last week.

The arrival of more women is bound to bring a change in what Clare Short calls the "yah-boo" culture of the Commons. Much has been made of the bizarre fact that there is a shooting range at Westminster, but no crèche — not to mention a dire shortage of ladies' toilets.

The change, which has brought the number of women MPs from 62 up to around 120, is chiefly due to Labour's policy, albeit short-lived, of standing women candidates in winnable seats. More than 100 of the new Parliament's women MPs are Labour.

The new women MPs are characterised by their youth, media-awareness and experience. Margaret Moran, who won Luton South, earned her stripes in local government. She took over the chaotic and divided Lewisham council in southeast London, saw off the hard left and turned it into a modern operation.

Among the new faces are many from local government or public services. Julia Drown, aged 34, who won Swindon South, was a National Health Service high-flyer before leaving Oxford NHS trust to stand for election. She said: "Women are more co-operative in the way they work. They're not so into scoring points, and more interested in hearing different points of view to get the best policy. I think it's time to modernise Westminster."

The new intake includes young MPs such as Lorna Fitzsimons, aged 28, who took Rochdale from the Liberal Democrats. She is former president of the National Union of Students, where she brought the union into line with New Labour.

Ruth Kelly, aged 29, a former Guardian journalist who moved to the Bank of England, won Bolton West from the Home Office minister Tom Sackville.

The youngest of the new intake is Claire Ward, not yet 25, a trainee solicitor and mayor of Elstree and Borehamwood, who took a sizeable majority in Watford.

Chair of the Scottish Labour party Ann McGuire swept out Michael Forsyth in Stirling, while Patricia Hewitt took Leicester West with a majority of almost 13,000. Ms Hewitt, formerly Neil Kinnock's press adviser, was tipped to head Tony Blair's Downing Street policy unit.

In a party that declared its priorities as "education, education and education", a significant proportion of incoming MPs are teachers. Melanie Johnson, a Justice of the Peace and schools inspector, derided by Tory opponent Nigel Evans as a single mother, had the pleasure of unseating him in Welwyn Hatfield.

Oona King becomes the second black woman MP — along with Diane Abbott. A former political adviser to MEP Glenys Kinnock, she won the safe seat of Bethnal Green and Bow.

Long-standing women MPs were also celebrating. Barbara Follett, who founded the Emily's list campaign to get more women into Parliament, won a resounding victory in Stevenage.

Harriet Harman spoke of women MPs improving the connection between people and Parliament. She also said the higher number of women MPs would drive forward policies on child care, opportunities for women at work and the balance between home and work. She called the result "a tremendous step forward for women's equality".

Wipe-outs in Scotland and Wales deepen Tory trauma

Lawrence Donegan and Rebecca Smithers

THERE was no way to disguise the catastrophe which befell the Conservative party in Scotland, losing all its 10 seats — and its vice-chairman, Jackson Carlaw, didn't even try. "It was a disaster of biblical proportions," he said. Some of his colleagues judged it to be worse than that.

Among the victims were three cabinet ministers — Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth, Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind and the Trade Secretary Ian Lang — as well as the entire Scottish Office ministerial team. It was an ignominious night for Scotland's oldest political party and one which won more than half the Scottish popular vote 40 years ago.

The result shocked even their opponents, who all shared in the spoils, and there was widespread evidence of tactical voting.

Labour gained most, taking six Tory seats, including the prized scalps of Mr Forsyth and Mr Rifkind. The Scottish Conservatives' new parliamentary leader is almost certain to be the former Northern Ireland Office minister and MP for Devizes, Michael Ancram, who represented Edinburgh South until 1987. His first task would be to address his party's policy on devolution before Scottish activists meet in June.

Michael Forsyth ran a virtually single-issue election campaign on the issue of devolution and Labour's so-called "tartan tax". It came as no consolation that his efforts increased support for the constitutional status quo as the campaign progressed and kept the swing against the Tories in Scotland — 8 per cent — below that in the UK as a whole. Some senior Scottish Conservatives said it had little option now but to become pro-devolution.

For Labour in Scotland there was only celebration. As well as taking the seats of two cabinet ministers, Labour also returned Westminster's first Muslim MP, Mohammed Sarwar, who fought off a strong challenge from the SNP to win Glasgow Govan. The party now has a record 56 MPs in Scotland.

The immediate task for Labour's Scottish Secretary will be the drafting of a short parliamentary bill which will trigger the referendum, expected to take place no later than October.

Both the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party won seats from the Conservatives, with the SNP taking the prize of Mr Lang's Galloway seat as one of its two gains. But although the nationalists increased their number of seats to six, there was a hint of disappointment about the party's failure to increase its share of the vote significantly.

Mike Russell, the SNP's chief executive, took consolation in the party's 41 second places in 72 constituencies. "But there was a huge tide running in favour of Labour and we were unable to resist that," he conceded.

The Tories were also wiped out in Wales when the Liberal Democrats seized their last remaining seat — the highly marginal Brecon and Radnor, top of the Lib Dem list of targets — from sitting Tory MP and Welsh Office minister Jonathan Evans.

The result leaves the Lib Dems with two seats in Wales. The party also held Montgomeryshire with a swing of 2 per cent. Plaid Cymru retained its four seats at Westminster.

The many Conservative casualties included senior Tories such as Welsh Office minister Gwilym Jones, who lost in suburban middle-class Cardiff North, and social security minister Roger Evans, who lost rural Monmouth. Mr Jones was unseated by Labour's Julie Morgan, who swept in with an 8,000 majority.

Walter Sweeney, the defeated Vale of Glamorgan Conservative MP, described the experience as "like being hit by a tidal wave".

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Thatcher revolution hits the buffers

Michael White on the achievements of John Major's premiership



Water under the bridge . . . Norma and John Major alone on the Thames PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

AS HE faces his brutal political retirement John Major lacks the advantages enjoyed by Winston Churchill, who was asked a difficult question about his legacy and replied: "Only history can relate the full story." He paused, then added: "And I shall write the history."

Major has not yet said he will be writing "If I May Say So". But the desire for self-justification runs strong in former tenants of No 10 Downing Street. Sooner or later the man who inherited a near-impossible legacy from the Evita of England's upwardly-mobile middle class will seek to tilt what might be the savage verdict of history more favourably in his direction.

Chosen, erroneously as it turned out, to be Thatcher's anointed successor after the 1990 Cabinet coup, he never escaped from her shadow, nor gained legitimacy. If anyone had brought her down (apart from herself), it was Michael Heseltine. Yet it was Major who became the usurper to the Thatcherite right.

Indeed, such is the right's weakness for "strong" leadership that Heseltine might better have reconciled them after 1990, "another blonde with revolving eyes," as a cabinet minister remarked at the time. Instead they got Major's emollient, collegiate leadership with "God Bless" at the end of his Gulf war broadcast — rather than "Rejoice, rejoice" issued as an instruction.

At the time most people were grateful to be free of the Iron Lady's hectoring. But the novelty wore off. The non-Tory majority soon watched fascinated as Amiable John failed either to embrace Euroscepticism or to rein it in. Equally damaging, it watched Major set up first the Scott inquiry into arms sales to Iraq, then Lord Nolan's review of standards in public life, otherwise known as sleaze, then move to thwart them both.

No one saw Major as a sleazeball, yet he seemed unable to grasp the issue and act decisively. Neil Hamilton was Thatcher's protégé, not his, yet it was Major that the Hamiltons and their mostly Thatcherite chums damaged. "Sleaze" will find its entry in the history books under Major, not Thatcher, even though, as so often, she bequeathed the problem.

But history's verdict on John Major does not simply depend on what he did — and failed to do — between November 28, 1990 and his fall from power in the worst Tory defeat since 1906.

Crucially, it also depends on what comes next. Will Tony Blair create a 20-year progressive hegemony by reuniting the centre-left and left as it has not been united since the rise of Labour and the Liberal split after 1918? Will the Tories fight and split or rapidly rediscover the lost virtues of pragmatism? Will Britain join the euro, succeed in stemming the integrationist tide, succumb to its bureaucratic embrace, or leave the EU altogether?

Will the economy flourish or fizzle? Will peace come to Ireland or civil strife to Scotland after the Tory Opposition wrecks devolution as well as the Anglo-Irish accord? All these answers will affect Major's place in the sun — or in the shade. Is he a healer, a bridge or a feeble, drifting wrecker like Arthur Balfour whose 1906 disaster after dithering over a deepening party split kept them out of Downing Street for almost 20 years?

Yet John Roy Major has already done well by the numerical standards of that small premiership club to which he belongs. In the 20th century, an unbroken six years and five months has been bettered by Thatcher, Asquith and Harold Macmillan alone. Only MacDonald, Callaghan and Major climbed so far after leaving school by 16.

None of which is enough, of course. John Major must be seen to have achieved, to have left monuments, if not in steel or glass in the Parisian manner, then in reshaping — modernising — Britain's musty old habits.

The first thing he indubitably achieved was to win the 1992 election. This was no mean feat, given that Labour had been 20 points ahead in the polls in 1990 as Trafalgar Square burned with the poll tax riots and the overheated housing market collapsed. That memory sustained Major in 1997.

Rail privatisation ("the poll tax on wheels" quipped one Tory) is almost complete. The Post Office slipped through the privatisers' hands, but only thanks to a Tory revolt. Army housing, Greenwich naval college, Hansard, the Majorites tried to flog anything that wasn't bolted down. They have their crowbars fixed on pensions, old people's homes and London Transport, unless Prime Minister Blair gets there first.

> **'Beta double plus for solid competence most of the time' says a political scientist on the Major years**

More than that, they kept up the open market pressures on such dignified institutions as the Stock Exchange, the Bank of England, Oxbridge ("This job's all fund-raising now," one Oxford principal moaned recently), the armed forces, the BBC. Some may benefit from the experience. For others it may prove a classic example of a successful operation after which, unfortunately, the patient dies. There is nothing very Tory about treating the British Army as if it was ripe for a management buy-out.

Major may have looked wimpish and talked wimpishly about creating a nation at ease with itself. But that is not how it felt for most Britons. Whenever a Korean firm threatened to do it cheaper, we were advised not to whinge, but to work harder. The advice may even be right. Blair seems to think so.

After all, John Major was the man who refused to sign the European Union's social chapter with its paternity leave and 48-hour working week. It was another characteristically tactical device at Maastricht in December 1991 when Major, the reader-of-small-print, negotiated two opt-outs — ie, bought time — on the social chapter and the single currency.

Whether that has ruined his party, or his country's prospect for the new millennium, is too soon to say. Ken Clarke and Michael Heseltine are almost as sure as Ted Heath that 10 years hence Britain will be fully reconciled to the European project, paternity leave, euros in the wallet and all.

Major was not so sure. All those pints of warm beer and old maids cycling unmugged to church have got to him. He is a "There'll Always be an England" man, though flexible as to what exactly that means. After all, his second proudest achievement is the National Lottery, another example of degenerate Majorite radicalism that Thatcher, the provincial Methodist, declined to sanction. It has certainly raised a lot of money for charity, heritage, sports and the arts, not to mention the Churchill family, the Royal Opera House and Eton College. And the evidence is irrefutable — though much quibbled over by the Camelot lobby — that the poor invest more of their disposable income on a 13 million-to-one flutter than does the average Churchill. How that squares with classless Major's oft-declared desire to help society's "have-nots" to get their share of life's good things is not immediately apparent.

If the lottery is Major's second monument, what is his first? On the last day of the campaign he cited his achievement in "strangling" the inflation beast in the post-war British economy, without mentioning the fearful price paid in terms of recession, higher taxes and debt, and the fiasco of Britain's two-year membership of the exchange rate mechanism (ERM) at a deflationary 2.95 marks to the pound. With the economy now looking good, compared with Europe, if not the United States and South Asia, Major loves to rattle off the things he didn't promise in 1992, but did achieve: falling unemployment, low inflation and interest rates. But voters sensed it was by accident, not design.

As for education, health and the other social services Major sought to improve by inflicting on them six of the free market best. It will take time to see whether the higher standards for which he strove were blips, cosmetic or the start of a solution to the class-biased weaknesses that have dogged British education for a century.

The slogan "a grammar school in every town" suggests that Major may have missed the point: better standards for the élite have never been the problem. But for a grammar school drop-out he seemed remarkably attached to a system that failed him.

Typical John Major. Thin-skinned and stubborn, he was patronised rotten for his dodgy syntax and verbal infelicities by clever Oxbridge types who could scarcely cross the street without help. Long after the time when he should have been saying: "If you're so smart, how come you've never done anything?" Major's easy charm would melt away to let him get prickly and defensive.

The Citizen's Charter was another "have-nots" initiative which earned him as much mockery as gratitude. The same goes for his most poignant lost opportunity: the search for peace in Northern Ireland. It took guts to launch the 1993 initiative with a shrinking Commons majority. Intelligence advice almost certainly warned Major that the 17-month IRA ceasefire was more likely to prove a tactical device.

It may yet yield success on the rocky road to peace in Ireland. In which case the fallen premier's name will appear on the roll of honour. But the tactician in John Major also appeased the diehard Unionists when he might better have called their bluff. The insistence on prior decommissioning on weapons, reasonable in abstract, doomed in bloody historical context, was such a missed opportunity. So was last summer's disastrous stand-off at Drumcree.

Most people are better off at the end of the Major years. But nations do not live by gross national product alone. John Major kept his cool — "beta double plus for solid competence most of the time," one political scientist put it as democracy's removal van trundled into Downing Street.

It is enough for history's second division. Tony Blair now has the chance to try for something bigger.

In Brief

ROADS protester Swampy was fined £50 and and ordered to pay £50 costs after admitting possessing cannabis near the site of Manchester airport's planned second runway.

LEUKAEMIA among children is more likely to strike in summer, suggesting a virus may be behind the illness, according to researchers from the Department of Community Medicine at Cambridge university.

BRITAIN would be guilty of "inhuman and degrading treatment" if it went ahead with plans to deport a convicted drugs courier dying of Aids to his home country of St Kitts where he would face destitution, the European Court of Human Rights ruled.

SANRDA HURLEY, whose son was born with Down's syndrome after she was refused a hospital screening test for abnormalities, accepted a settlement of £300,000 in the High Court.

THE English Patient completed an extraordinary year by carrying off three British Academy of Film and Television Arts (Bafta) awards.

A MAURITIAN who assaulted a Royal Marine on the Diego Garcia naval base in the Indian Ocean is serving a three-year jail sentence in the UK because the offence was committed on British territory. Louis Cheril Annea, aged 32, who had never been to Britain before, speaks no English and is 13,000 miles from his young family.

BRITAIN'S new Labour Government ruled out returning the Elgin Marbles to Greece, thereby entering its first diplomatic row after assuming office.

THE theory that toxic gases from mattresses can cause cot deaths was further undermined with the publication of a study showing babies naturally carry one of the chemicals alleged to be harmful.

STEPHEN GLASCOE, a doctor aged 46, who has worn an earring for more than 20 years, was expelled by the Ridgeway golf course, near Caerphilly in South Wales, because he didn't comply with dress codes.

WARWICK university has sparked a lecturers' revolt by offering an undergraduate place at its law school to Valentine Strasser, the 31-year-old former military dictator of Sierra Leone whose troops were accused by Amnesty International of torture and executions.

HUGHIE GREEN, who hosted television game shows and was best known for the talent show, Opportunity Knocks, has died aged 77.

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BBC loses Jackson to Channel 4

Andrew Culf

MICHAEL JACKSON, controller of BBC1, was last week appointed to succeed Michael Grade as the chief executive of Channel 4.

The 39-year-old switches to one of broadcasting's most coveted posts on June 1, less than a year after being singled out by John Birt, the BBC's director general, for promotion.

His departure after 10 years at the BBC is a hammer blow for the corporation, leaving its new broadcast directorate without one of its star executives and increasingly bereft of big name talent.

Mark Thompson, controller of BBC2 since last summer, will temporarily take charge of BBC1, but is not expected to apply for the job permanently.

Mr Jackson, who had been spoken of as a future director general of the BBC, said: "I greatly value the opportunity to lead an organisation which has transformed television. Channel 4 has a unique programme proposition, which I believe will continue to thrive in the future because of its special status, which must be defended."

BBC sources said they were disappointed, but Channel 4 had made "a very good booking".

Possible successors at the BBC include: Alan Yentob, Mr Jackson's mentor, who could switch from his job as director of programmes; David Docherty, director of strategy and channel development; Paul Jackson, head of entertainment; and Peter Salmon, Granada's programme director.



Jackson . . . will bring 'style and enthusiasm'

Steeped in the medium, Mr Jackson is claimed to have played at being a TV scheduler as a child. He stunned colleagues in meetings with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the transmission times of the children's programme Skippy in the 1960s.

Mr Jackson, a media studies graduate from the Central London Polytechnic, and outside the usual BBC Oxbridge loop, was one of the first wave of young, independent producers to benefit from the launch of Channel 4, which commissioned him to make The Media Show.

Sir Michael Bishop, Channel 4's chairman, said: "Michael Jackson has established an outstanding reputation in successive senior appointments at the BBC.

"As a vocal and effective supporter of the creation of Channel 4 in his earlier career before joining the BBC, I am delighted he will now have the opportunity of stamping his own style and enthusiasm on Channel 4."

Mr Jackson's public demeanour is very different from that of Mr Grade, a combative and colourful media mogul who attracted controversy throughout his eight years in the £600,000-a-year post.

The battle to succeed Mr Grade — who quit to devote more time to his family leisure business interests — had narrowed down to a contest between Mr Jackson and John Willis, Channel 4's director of programmes, who had strong internal support.

The pair had clashed in public recently about the respective merits of Channel 4 and BBC2. Mr Willis accused Mr Jackson of being a "copy-cat criminal" for stealing the minority station's ideas, while Mr Jackson denounced programmes such as The Girlie Show. Mr Willis, who was understood to have made an impassioned pitch for the post, is expected to quit Channel 4.

Maze jail protest ends

David Sharrock

LOYALIST prisoners occupying part of Northern Ireland's top security Maze prison last week ended their protest after talks with Government officials reached a compromise on new security measures.

It came as a series of bomb hoaxes disrupted Belfast. The city airport was closed to passengers for a time and a number of abandoned vehicles were examined by the Army after telephone warnings to the BBC.

The callers gave no code word and it was unclear who was responsible. But there were no reports of polling for the election being disrupted.

The prison dispute was sparked by a security clampdown after an IRA escape tunnel was discovered. Representatives of the Ulster Democratic Party, linked to the Ulster Freedom Fighters, held talks with officials at Stormont before meeting prisoners. The Progressive Unionist Party, linked to the Ulster Volunteer Force, held separate talks at Stormont.

Trouble flared last week when loyalists refused to co-operate with a new security regime, including two daily head counts and lock-ups, introduced after the tunnel was discovered last month.

The loyalists claim they are being punished for the IRA activity and object to being locked in cells during counts. Prison officers claim parts of the Maze have been under the control of paramilitary prisoners.

Paintings saved in gallery fire

INVESTIGATORS were working last weekend to discover the cause of a fire which swept through a gallery at the Royal Academy, threatening to destroy paintings worth millions of pounds, *writes Stuart Millar*.

Up to 100 people, who had been attending a lecture, were evacuated last Saturday night after the blaze broke out in the space between the roof and a false ceiling above the Lecture Room gallery, which was being refurbished.

Officials initially feared that the blaze had caused widespread damage. But as firefighters finished mopping up inside the 18th century building in central London, which opened for business as usual on Sunday, it emerged that damage was minimised by swift action. Around 40 works, mainly architectural models and drawings, suffered minor damage.

David Gordon, the academy's secretary, said: "A fire is always a serious matter, but we were able to deal with it very quickly in the way we had predicted."

A massacre and its aftermath

BUOYED by exhilaration, high on adrenalin, and bursting to enjoy the first fruits of his monumental victory as soon as possible, Tony Blair got straight down to building the new Labour government last weekend as the shock waves continue to echo around a political class, a country — and perhaps a continent — which had expected to see Mr Blair in Downing Street but which had barely contemplated a triumph on the scale that exploded out of the ballot boxes last week.

The single most important thing to say about the British election result is that it transforms every possibility on the political landscape. It does not just redraw the map, it alters what the map itself can actually be about. These things can appear possible in theory beforehand, but they only become comprehensible in all their power and implication once they have happened. And what happened on May 1 was that an 18-year-long Conservative experiment with the nature of Britain and the British people was obliterated. But in the slipstream of that big change there are others. The astonishing resuscitation of the Liberal Democrats, maturing into a genuine parliamentary party and, in so doing, changing the nature of British party politics is one. The doubling of the number of women in Parliament is another. The effects of such changes have scarcely been thought about in any serious way yet. Whatever happens over the Labour years ahead — and who knows after such a turnaround how many of those years there will be — it is vital that they must never degenerate into Conservatism with a more human face. The mandate from the electorate is for change — big, systematic and thoroughgoing change.

The political consequence of last week's result is that Britain now has two parties — Labour and the Liberal Democrats — one huge in parliamentary terms and the other still small, which will both be energised by an outcome whose implications they will need time, which they have now got, to digest. Both parties have fought long, patient, disciplined and self-sacrificing campaigns over stretching years — upwards of half a century in the Liberal Democrats' case — to achieve a position from which solid advance seemed genuinely possible. Now, in a cathartic and transformative 24 hours, they have both been catapulted into a new political ascendancy.

For Labour, this result is a complete — well, an almost complete — vindication of everything that those who stayed in the party after 1981 and who stuck by the task of reconstruction after 1983 have stood for. It was right, and moving, that Neil Kinnock should have been at the centre of the election coverage and the dawn celebrations, because without his direction and determination as Labour leader for nine hard years Mr Blair would not have inherited a party which was so hungry for election victory that it was prepared to submit — as in large measure it had to — to the new man's single-minded regime.

Of course the country was ready for change, but no one should kid themselves that it would have voted for change, especially to such vast electoral effect, if it had not had confidence in what it was voting for. The result did not just fall into Labour's lap because of the passing of the years. It was won because, in the final years of Labour's long march back to power, Mr Blair made it happen by creating a Labour party that was capable of reaching out into almost all geographical areas and almost all groups in the country. That has never happened before, save in the exceptional circumstances of 1945, when it took a world war to do it. The full possibilities of Labour's hegemony have barely been thought of yet, but they are there now, waiting to be explored and exploited, the bedrock of Europe's most important progressive opportunity for more than 20 years.

That is a lesson the Conservative party will have many years to contemplate and learn from. As the disaster cascaded around him, John Major mouthed another litany of political banalities to the effect that you win some and you lose some. But that hardly scratches the surface of what happened to the Tories and their psyche. The Conservative party was once the most formidable election-winning machine in British and European history. But it has been shrivelling at the grassroots for some time. It lost its long-held bases in local government some years ago, and it has now been struck down at parliamentary level too. It has been wiped out in Wales and massacred in Scotland, and even in England it now trails far adrift in Labour's wake. This is a party run and led by people who always thought of themselves as the natural ruling class of Britain and who mostly still do. Over 18 long and increasingly arrogant and selfish years, they had ceased to take non-Conservative politics seriously. Mr Major, to take a personal example, embodied that habituation to power. First elected to the Commons in 1979, last Saturday was his first full day as an MP in opposition. He has as little experience of opposition as Mr Blair has of government, but the Labour leader is far better prepared in every way for the change than Mr Major. His resignation embodied the Tory party's more general difficulty of coping with defeat.

But the former prime minister and the former governing party must now begin to get used to a life they have never properly contemplated, as part of a pluralist political settlement in which they no longer hold power. This will, we hope, be a hard but a good lesson for the Tories. They need their noses rubbing in it for a while. They need to learn what it has been like for the rest of us for so long. Whether they can do this quickly, or even at all, is absolutely unknowable. Experience suggests that their historic pragmatism means that they will adapt. But the condition of the Conservative party and its manic free market and Europhobic supporters in the rightwing think-tanks and the rightwing press is a massive barrier to this being achieved with any ease or speed. The future of the Conservative party as we know it is wholly in the balance. But then so is everything else. For this has been the nearest thing to a peaceful revolution in British politics for half a century.

Smoking out the true liability

THE PRINCIPLE that the polluter should pay has suffered another setback in the struggle to make the tobacco industry responsible for its injurious activities. For the prospect of insurance companies around the world being saddled with a huge compensation bill for smoking-related deaths is doubly bad news. Not only would it let the industry off the financial hook (and rescue its shares) but it would shift the burden on to the shoulders of ordinary people buying new insurance — many of whom have never touched a cigarette in their lives.

The industry has so far been very coy about revealing the fine print of product liability policies taken out over many decades. It would weaken the defence that smoking does no harm to say, in effect, "anyhow, we're insured". It would also result in the conduct of its defence being handed over to the insurers if they were brought into the action. But if a comprehensive settlement of the type being discussed in Washington were reached, giving the industry immunity for the future in return for setting up a vast fund for victims now, then it would become worth its while to invoke the secret policies. The insurers would undoubtedly contest liability and further complicate the process. It is being suggested that when most of these policies were written in the 1960s and 1970s, their exclusion clauses were not sufficiently tight to exclude healthcare reimbursement. But the insurers could argue that by that time the tobacco industry was well aware of the harmful effect of their product and that such information should have been disclosed. Whoever won the argument, it could drag on in the courts for years. Most of those now eligible to claim might well be dead before it was sorted out.

The basic proposition now under discussion by attorney generals from more than 20 US states is fundamentally unsound. It would allow the companies to shift the problem of compensation on to the shoulders of governments in return for limited regulation of their product coupled with unlimited immunity from any further claims. It would be all the worse if the cash which the industry put up — estimated at between $200 and $300 billion — came ultimately from insurance companies and through them from the general public.

Such plea bargaining leaves the central question unresolved: are governments going to take energetic steps to make smoking less attractive, or will they tinker at the edges of the problem? For the industry to offer a lump sum of this kind amounts to an admission of liability (even though they insist it is not so). If tobacco is a life-threatening product, then it is simply irresponsible for governments not to make every effort to reduce its use drastically. This is particularly true in the US, whose cigarette taxes are among the lowest in the world.

Blair swept to power on a wave of hope

Continued from page 1

is between constitutional reform and the rest of the programme. The constitutional agenda will make good the radicalism. Its chances are clearer than they were — frighteningly so. The election result greatly simplifies what will happen. Without a single MP in either Scotland or Wales, the Conservatives cannot sensibly obstruct what's now about to unfold. They haven't got the voices, but they also haven't got the politics. If ever there was a clear mandate for radical change, this is it. It couldn't be more emphatic. No MPs, no Comment. And the House of Lords, temple of the unelected, will be hard put to intervene against this tidal wave of democratic purpose.

So constitutional reform is where we will first feel the heat of an unfamiliar politics, one dominated by a government that always gets its way. The comparable phase was Thatcher between '83 and '87, but then the leader was already a divisive figure. One of several ways in which Mr Blair has no intention of emulating his predecessor is in this matter of divisiveness. Disagreement will not be encouraged. Contemplating the class of '97, one comes face to face with the fact that its leader will have no need to listen to anybody. His cabinet will be tempted to believe it is the repository of perfect wisdom, all on its own.

Devolution, instead of being tested in the fire of hard parliamentary debate, will be a push-over for a government whose majority is so vast that it can ignore even a sizeable body of critics in its own ranks. Whether on the Bill of Rights, the reform of the Lords or the make-up of the Scottish Parliament, the premium on ministers choosing the right way to exercise their limitless authority thus becomes enormous.

There will, in short, be little struggle. In some areas such concord may be fruitful. For example, reforming the processes of government may be easier with a huge band of newcomers. Along with the wonderful culture-change of age and gender, Commons reform, which would help to restore the rationality and decency of politics under several headings, should be more easily accomplished. But, as the result sinks in, and the thinning-down of argument comes abruptly closer, the untrammelled power the people have placed in the hands of a disciplined team, led by a man of iron, begins to look awesome.

Nor will Old Labour be a counterweight. Old Labour is almost as big a victim of this landslide as the Conservative party. With a more modest majority, Messrs Skinner and Livingstone might have counted for something. They now look irrelevant, a gadfly on the side of the elephant.

In the litmus-area of tax-and-spend, I think the meltdown majority, far from making New Labour regret its caution, will reinforce it. It confirms Mr Blair's long-held beliefs. The education of New Labour in the politics of moderation will now be applied to the nation as a whole. Its object will be to deepen the party's credentials as the political force that has taken over from the Tories as the spokesman of Middle England, alongside its Pan-Celtic role, and the guardian, therefore, of a pragmatic economic stance. In the old grammar, I expect Labour, in these areas, to move, if anything, to the right not the left, and find its "radical centrism" elsewhere.

It will have indecent latitude. It's about to be a government without an opposition. Seldom has a party better deserved its collapse than the Tory party, but it won't be long before we start regretting its weakness. This condition, however, was a necessary punishment for the appallingly self-indulgent performance Tories have graced with the name of government for several years. Now a bloody battle will unfold.

Can the Tories avoid replicating the fate of Labour in the early 1980s? Anyone with an ounce of political realism knows the only strategy that will return the party anywhere near power is one that makes for the middle ground. But then, such people ought to have known the same thing from 1992 to 1997, yet insisted on driving Conservatism towards the extremes where the electorate turns out to be even more utterly unforgiving than many people imagined.

I anticipate the spectacle of a party having too little sense, yet, to reach for the centre ground. It would be of a piece with the contemporary madness of Conservatism to find it exercising its brilliant judgment one more time, and responding to Blair's historic triumph by driving hard in the opposite direction.

THAT would be a bad outcome for politics and government. In one sense, indeed, the result makes that point more widely. It is a very good result, but a very unfair one. It is therapy for the system, after years of minor degradation. But the system that produced the result looks worse than ever, as the fate of every party except Labour proves.

It was a fine election for the Liberal Democrats. But they still didn't get the seats their votes deserved, and the result as a whole strengthens the reasons why everybody should understand this better. Most of all, the Government, in its hour of triumph, should be aware of the arithmetical limitations of its mandate.

On the face of it, with 419 MPs, any thoughts Labour once had about proportional representation may be for the birds. The party, having won the enormous victory the present system is capable of producing, needs nothing and nobody to help it. But it did this with only 44 per cent of the national vote, thus exposing a discrepancy between votes and seats spectacularly worse than any with which Mrs Thatcher herself presumed to govern — often chided by her political opponents.

So the result, while being a memorable and necessary catharsis, is in another way the ultimate argument against the basis of British politics. It has produced the corrective, but is a wild over-correction. It leaves parts of Britain totally unrepresented, which will have its own alienating consequences. Bringing to an end 18 years of one-party government, it inaugurates five more, in which one-partyism will rule quite unrestrained, unless the new Prime Minister's wisdom and magnanimity, his passion for a newly united nation, prevail.

Indifference feeds the extremists

EDITORIAL

THE members of France's ruling coalition — the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and the centre-right Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF) — have just published their joint election programme. The Socialists are due to follow suit.

The Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, said that it was high time "to get down to the nitty-gritty". High time indeed, it is tempting to remark, in view of the electorate's apparent indifference towards the two main groups of parties that will join battle at France's two-round general election on May 25 and June 1.

The message of an opinion poll commissioned by Le Monde could not be clearer: with less than a month of campaigning to go, France is divided into three groups. A third of voters believe the present coalition can run the country properly, another third put their faith in the left, and the remaining third trust no one.

The ineffectuality and failures of the left when it was in power, and President Chirac's promises, no sooner made than forgotten, have made the electorate totally unreceptive to the speeches, manifestos and programmes of the various parties.

This is true on issues such as unemployment and improved living standards, but even more so on the question of ensuring that the financing of political parties is guided by higher moral standards.



'I believe that I could offer you a fly-posting course in May and June'
'So, what d'you say?'

There is similar scepticism about what would happen if the left were to win, or the outgoing majority were to be returned to power. Most voters would regard either eventuality with indifference. The message for the main parties is even worse: a quarter of their own supporters show the same indifference about the outcome of the election.

This climate of disenchantment is deeply worrying. The way the election debate was almost spirited away by President Jacques Chirac when he decided to make the campaign as short as the constitution and the calendar would allow leaves very little time for political leaders to make any impact or try to inspire new confidence and hope.

There is a real risk that many voters may be tempted to abstain or to register a protest vote in favour of the far-right National Front (FN). Opinion polls suggest that the FN, which has been pushed out of the limelight by the bipolarisation of political debate since the dissolution of parliament, continues to be able to rely on a solid base of 14 per cent of voters. It is almost as if it were silently feeding on voters' indifference.

That would be the most terrible of paradoxes, and a signal failure for a president who said that one of the reasons he was dissolving parliament was the urgent need to combat the far right.

(April 30)

Chrétien decides to put his future to a vote

Anne Pélouas in Montreal

ON APRIL 27, the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chrétien, called a snap general election for June 2. He said that Canada was at the crossroads and needed to be prepared for the 21st century, and that Canadians should be offered a choice as to what kind of society they wanted in future.

After a first term of less than four years, the Liberal party is virtually certain of being returned to power with 40-50 per cent of the vote, despite a recent fall in popularity. It will be helped by the fact that the opposition is split into four parties, the Bloc Québécois, the Reform party, the New Democrats (NDP) and the Conservative party.

Chrétien said he thought the Liberal party had done most of the things it promised to do in its 1993 policy statement, and had been particularly successful in putting government finances back on a sound footing and restoring Canada's financial sovereignty.

He said Canada could now see "the light at the end of the tunnel", quoting the latest International Monetary Fund report, which forecast that Canada's economic growth could be the strongest of all the leading industrialised countries.

Chrétien was careful, however, not to underestimate the progress that Canada would need to make before emerging from the tunnel. The unemployment rate is still running at around 10 per cent, and the Liberals' job creation schemes have not so far had the hoped-for effect, even if the government prides itself on having done better in this department since 1993 than Germany, France and Italy put together.

One of the government's main achievements has been to reduce the budget deficit from 42 to 19 billion Canadian dollars (US$30 to $13.5 billion) in the past three and a half years.

Chrétien thinks the key to Canada's future lies in its renewed unity. The country is still reeling from the shock result of the 1995 Quebec referendum, which the pro-sovereignty campaigners came within a whisker of winning.

The prime minister did not breathe a word about national unity in his April 27 announcement, but it had been a central theme of all his speeches the previous week. It is still a key issue, and on election night Canadians throughout the country will be looking very closely at the Liberal party's performance in Quebec.

Chrétien knows he will have no hope of being able to reassure non-Québécois about his chances of scotching moves for another referendum on Quebec's sovereignty unless he wins extra seats in that province.

But that will be difficult, since the Bloc Québécois, the party through which the pro-sovereignty faction expresses its views in Ottawa, is confident it will repeat its 1993 performance — it won more than two-thirds of the parliamentary seats in Quebec and earned "official opposition" status.

The Bloc Québécois will benefit from unswerving support by the electoral machine of the province's ruling party, the Parti Québécois, and can expect an active role to be played during the campaign by the Quebec prime minister, Lucien Bouchard, a "renegade" from federal politics, former leader of the Bloc Québécois, and the province's most popular politician.

As for the ultra-conservative Reform party, it dreams of only one thing: depriving the Bloc Québécois of its status as the official opposition in Ottawa. When parliament was dissolved, Reform held the same number of seats as the Bloc Québécois — 50 — most of them in western Canada.

(April 30)

Bulgaria learns to live with its Turks

Christophe Châtelot in Nova Mahrala

THE Bulgarian village of Nova Mahrala, tucked away in the parched Rhodope mountains at an altitude of 2,000m, was in a state of exuberance: its 2,300 inhabitants, all of Turkish origin, were celebrating the Muslim festival of Bairam. The festival is a major event in this region of Bulgaria, where most of the country's 800,000-strong Turkish community live.

However, more people were flocking to Nova Mahrala's cafés than to its dilapidated mosque. Fifty years of aggressive anti-religious propaganda by the communist regime have left their mark, and the upsurge of interest in religion that began in 1989 has since subsided.

"The Muslims, like most of the country's 85 per cent Orthodox [Christian] population, remain faithful to certain rites and traditions, but there are no fundamentalists here," says Antonina Jeliaskova, president of the Bulgarian Foundation for Research into Minorities.

It was not so long ago that 50 per cent of Bulgarians regarded the Turks as "religious fanatics". But "negative clichés are on their way out", says Jeliaskova with satisfaction.

The general election on April 19 provided further evidence that both the "Turkish separatists" and the nationalists who believe in a "greater Bulgaria" have been marginalised. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), formed in 1990 by Ahmad Dogan to defend the interests of the Muslim minority, makes a great show of its moderation: its political platform contains no confessional or ethnic references.

The MRF tries to present itself as a "third way" between the Socialists and the ruling neoliberal Union of Democratic Forces. But it is a difficult balancing act, since it supports economic policies similar to those of the neoliberals and continues to be perceived by Bulgarians, including the Turkish minority, as "the Muslims' party".

The 7.9 per cent of the vote picked up by the Union for National Salvation, which includes the MRF and some small monarchist parties, more or less corresponds to the proportion of Bulgarians of Turkish origin in the population (8.5 per cent). "The Turkish question is not political but economic," says Mihail Ivanov, who was an adviser on ethnic issues to the former president, Zheliu Zhelev.

Bulgaria's Turks have called for the compulsory teaching of their language in schools (it is currently optional). And the MRF has been campaigning for the introduction of legislation to help farming areas in the mountains, where members of the Turkish minority grow tobacco.

It is not so much discrimination as the parlous state of the tobacco sector — hard hit by the economic crisis — and the fact that Bulgaria's poorest regions are inhabited by Turks that explain why there is higher unemployment in their community than among the rest of the population — with the notable exception of the country's 400,000 Gypsies, who usually find themselves on the bottom rung of the ladder.

People in Nova Mahrala, as everywhere else in Bulgaria, have somehow managed to get by despite the crisis. Mehmet Metkov has been much more successful than others. In his huge marble-decorated residence, he receives visitors who come to pay their respects to "the richest man in the village".

Metkov, who is the MRF's local representative, worked as a photographer under the communist regime but quickly started a new career as a businessman in 1989. In 1990 he began a coach service to Turkey.

At the time, large numbers of Bulgarian Turks were leaving for Turkey, some attracted by its relative wealth, others prompted by painful memories of the forced "Bulgarianisation" introduced by Todor Zhivkov's regime in 1984.

That process, described as one of "national regeneration", banned the Turkish community's language, traditions and religion, and forced its members to Bulgarianise their names. Of around 380,000 people who fled to Turkey during the summer of 1989, only one-third returned.

FOR MONTHS afterwards thousands of small traders regularly travelled to Turkey to buy the cheap consumer goods for which there was great demand in Bulgaria.

The flourishing business careers of hundreds of people like Metkov, together with the traditional tolerance of most Bulgarians, have helped to encourage peaceful coexistence between the two communities — a phenomenon that is not common in the Balkans. "Paradoxically, the economic and social crisis that hit the country did not foment inter-ethnic tension — on the contrary," says Jeliaskova.

But relations between the two communities are far from perfect. Mixed marriages are rare. It is difficult for the members of the Turkish élite to get top official jobs, and the new government is no more prepared than its predecessor to entertain the notion that the Turkish minority should enjoy collective rights. The Sofia government has not signed the European convention for the protection of national minorities.

The Bulgarian Turks have also become more isolated. The satellite dishes to be found everywhere in Nova Mahrala pick up Turkish television channels. And people on the streets often speak in their native language.

Since the beginning of the century, when Bulgarian independence brought down the curtain on five centuries of Ottoman rule, relations between the two communities have been affected by successive waves of Turkish immigrants followed by attempts by the government, even before the communist regime took over, to assimilate that minority. Those relations would now seem to have entered a new phase — one of indifference.

(May 2)

Belarus leader loosens reins on opposition

Sophie Shihab in Minsk

THE uprising of "young Belarussian partisans" against the "dictatorship" of President Alexander Lukashenko which, we were told by the Belarussian Popular Front (BPF), would take place on April 26 on the occasion of the 11th annual commemoration of the Chernobyl disaster, failed to materialise.

But it is only a question of time before it does take place, claim some leaders of the BPF, whose marshals that day supervised a demonstration of more than 10,000 sympathisers in the capital, Minsk. To everyone's surprise, the president's special forces were not even to be seen anywhere along the demonstration route.

Under pressure from Boris Yeltsin, with whom he signed a treaty of union between Russia and Belarus on April 2, Lukashenko apparently decided not to offer the world's media yet another spectacle of his henchmen laying into demonstrators and passers-by alike.

The BPF claims that Lukashenko will wait until May 15 before reverting to his old repressive habits. That date will mark the end of a "popular debate" on the union theoretically being conducted in both countries.

The revised text will then come before both parliaments. The communist-dominated Russian Duma will certainly approve it as enthusiastically as Belarus's Presidential Chamber, which replaced the legitimate parliament when it was wound up by Lukashenko last autumn.

The more energetic ex-members of parliament, some of them former communists converted to democratic ideas, meet regularly in a two-room suburban flat, as well as marching in the front line of BPF demonstrations.

Like those of Lukashenko's former ministers and collaborators who have gone over to the opposition, they are regularly beaten up, arrested and fined heavily or sent to prison for 10 days by tame courts. They are also forbidden to leave the country.

In the end Yeltsin may have felt embarrassed that Lukashenko was the only leader of a former Soviet republic who was a candidate for reunification. And Lukashenko may indeed have heeded Yeltsin's calls for restraint.

But observers in Minsk offer another explanation for the security forces' sudden moderation. Lukashenko, elected president in 1994 with more than 80 per cent of the vote, remains the country's only charismatic leader. But his popularity takes a plunge whenever he uses hamfisted methods to crack down on a demonstration.

It is true he can control and manipulate the Belarussian media. But certain independent newspapers, printed in Lithuania, have managed to survive. And two Russian television channels can still be picked up in Minsk.

The rural population overwhelmingly supports Lukashenko and reunification with Russia. But up to a third of city-dwellers, and a majority of young people, still regard him as "Luka-Urod" (Luka the little monster).

The opposition feels it may only have been the vigilance of BPF marshals that prevented clashes on April 26. They arrested a handful of provocateurs who were throwing stones. Lukashenko has described opposition protesters in the past as "drug addicts in the pay of Nato" (he is *persona non grata* in Western capitals).

As the date of the demonstration approached, state television fuelled fears that the BPF might be preparing some sort of armed action. The BPF leadership itself has not quite got its act together. "The people would be perfectly entitled to resort to armed resistance," says the movement's radical leader in exile, Zenon Pozniak. But another opposition leader says: "Not only do we not have weapons, but we can't even afford a loud-hailer."

New opposition movements made up of ex-communists and liberals seem even less well organised, although they are aided by various democratic support programmes launched by the British, German and American embassies (the French have been keeping a low profile).

The Belarussian Yabloko movement's first congress, held in Minsk on April 27, was attended by the head of the Russian democratic opposition Yabloko movement, Grigory Yavlinsky. He suggested a single central bank should be set up. His suggestion has the support of the Russian central bank.

But the Belarussian opposition, like Lukashenko himself, is opposed to the idea on the grounds that it would affect national sovereignty. The Russian-Belarussian union therefore looks likely to remain a propaganda tool, even if its text is ratified at the end of May. Lukashenko will then be free to deal with the opposition as he wishes.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe would like to open a mission in Minsk, as it has done in parts of the former Soviet Union where there is inter-ethnic tension. But one of its representatives was recently prevented from attending the trial of a former member of parliament.

The informed view in Minsk is that the present lull in repressive action by Lukashenko does not mean the country can look forward to an easing of political tension.

(April 29)

Banknotes put Zaireans in a spin

Jean Hélène in Kinshasa

ONE of the legacies that Laurent Kabila's rebel forces will no doubt inherit from President Mobutu Sese Seko's regime is financial chaos. There are no fewer than three different monetary zones in Zaire, a country that has been on a money-printing spree since 1990. That policy, which has caused hyperinflation, has resulted in an angry backlash among shopkeepers sympathetic to the opposition.

In 1992 the then prime minister, Etienne Tshisekedi (a member of the opposition), refused to approve a 5 million zaire banknote that the central bank wanted to put into circulation. His successor introduced a new zaire (NZ), which was worth 3 million old zaires. The exchange rate was then 3 NZs to the dollar.

Kinshasa shopkeepers' refusal to accept the new notes was one of the reasons for the 1993 lootings by government troops: they were being paid in NZs they could not use. The NZ was later accepted everywhere, except in Tshisekedi's stronghold, the diamond-rich province of Kasai.

Monetary mayhem peaked when private businesses were allowed to mint money. These "legal forgers" imported container-loads of new, foreign-printed banknotes and swiftly changed them into dollars before the exchange rate fell through the floor. In 1993, the annual inflation rate reached 9,600 per cent.

Zaireans called the new banknotes "left indicators", because the lorries carrying them turned left as they drove out of Kinshasa airport, before dropping them off at Mobutu's private yacht.

In December 1996, the prime minister, Kengo wa Dondo, who a year earlier had brought the annual inflation rate down to 400 per cent, tried to get the population to accept new banknotes with a higher — and therefore inflationary — face value.



Money-go-round: A Zairean women brandishes banknotes last month after rebels announced they were issuing some new currency notes

Egged on by the opposition, Kinshasa shopkeepers refused to accept the new notes, which they nicknamed "prostates" (a reference to the president's illness). This widespread rejection brought the monthly inflation rate down to 5 per cent in January 1997, prompting a European economist to remark: "The Zaireans deserve a Nobel Prize for Economics".

But in Shaba province, the state-run copper mining company Gécamines paid its 35,000 employees with new banknotes issued by the central bank, thus causing the local value of the NZ to fall to half its value in Kinshasa.

The rebel leaders are about to fix new exchange rates between NZs in Kivu, NZs in Shaba, and old zaires in Kasai. But the problem has become so complex that they will probably continue to rely for some time on a fourth "financial zone" — that of the dollar.

(April 23)

France prepares for the euro

Pascale Krémer

AT THE end of May the French government will launch the first phase of a six-year campaign, costing 30 million francs ($5.1 million), to help the French to get accustomed to the euro. About a million copies of a brochure explaining the various stages of the currency's introduction will be distributed to banks and administrative bodies. There will also be radio and television announcements and a freephone number.

In 2002, the French will have a period of only six months to adjust to the switchover: on January 1 the euro will come into circulation, and on July 1 the franc will no longer be legal tender. But the new currency will already have been in use since January 1, 1999, for banking and commercial transactions.

"The French think that the euro will be good for the nation but cause them enormous practical problems," says Lionel Brault, head of Kendo, the government's consultants on the transition. "They can't imagine what D-day will be like, and that scares them."

"Money is all about trust, it's a symbol of exchange and of relationships with others," says Dominique Lassarre, a professor of social psychology. "That trust will evaporate for a time.

"One also has to allow for the psychological impact of giving up the franc, even among young people, because it symbolises the national identity. The problem is not switching from one currency to another, but losing the franc."

Consumer associations worry that the six-month period when the two currencies will be used concurrently is too short. "It's a pity that double-currency price tagging and point of sale information will be introduced only at the last moment," says Pierre Marleix, head of a leading consumer association. He wonders how people are suddenly going to be able to use the euro when they still have problems with old francs (the new franc was introduced in 1960). He feels the period between 1999 and 2002 should be used to "acclimatise" the French, particularly the most vulnerable 20 million or so — the handicapped, the illiterate and the aged.

Marie-José Nicoli, head of UFC, a consumer association, thinks that the euro should not be allowed to accentuate inequalities and that the cost of the switchover should not be charged to consumers, who are afraid of being cheated.

It will indeed be tempting for shopkeepers to benefit financially from the conversions and thus offset the cost to them of going over to the euro (computer systems, staff training and so on). It will be easy to bump up prices because consumers will temporarily lose their bearings. The retail profession says that competition will keep prices down.

The French bankers' association says euro accounts will "probably" be subject to bank charges from 1999 to 2002, because interest-bearing current accounts will be brought in from 1999 on, and "there'll have to be some kind of compensation". To consumer associations, that sounds like a ploy to get customers to pay for certain services that have up to now been free.

Recently, an experimental two-week circulation of euro coins was organised in Poitiers by its Higher Business School. Coins worth one, two and 10 euros could be bought from banks and 100 stores taking part in the operation.

Not everyone was delighted, "but as we're going to have to get used to it we might as well get some idea of what it's like beforehand", said a greengrocer, who was selling her apples for 1.80 euros a kilo. A well-dressed man in a downtown café said: "I'm all for opening up borders, but the euro is something else. I can't even make head or tail of Belgian francs."

For Poitiers and its business school, the spinoff from media exposure was far greater than the operation's 500,000-franc outlay.

(April 16)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

Karadzic Is Still Thorn in NATO's Side

Michael Dobbs

VIRTUALLY every day, an easily recognizable figure with an unruly pompadour of gray hair reports to work at his political headquarters in Pale, capital of the Bosnian Serb ministate. U.S. officials say they are in no doubt that Radovan Karadzic, an indicted war criminal, is effectively calling the shots in the Serbian half of Bosnia more than eight months after an American-brokered agreement supposedly stripped him of all power.

The continuing influence of Karadzic and others wanted for war crimes is turning into a major headache for the Clinton administration as it searches for ways to make good on its commitment to withdraw 8,600 U.S. peacekeeping troops from Bosnia by the middle of 1998 without reigniting Europe's worst conflagration since World War II.

Balkan experts in the administration and elsewhere agree that the goal of a self-sustaining peace in Bosnia will remain illusory as long as people like Karadzic stand in the way of even a minimal reintegration of the country.

While the war criminals issue is one of several examples of noncompliance with the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, it has become a symbol of a much larger problem. In purely military terms, the Bosnia operation has been a huge success, with scarcely any casualties to NATO troops. But prospects for long-term peace in Bosnia seem dubious as long as economic reconstruction and the fate of more than a million refugees are held hostage to the ambitions of the politicians who plunged the country into war.

Critics, inside and outside the administration, complain of an atmosphere of drift that has resulted in widespread noncompliance with the political provisions of Dayton. At the same time, pressure is growing in Congress for a unilateral pullout of U.S. troops from Bosnia, with a bipartisan group led by Rep. John R. Kasich, R-Ohio, proposing to cease funding by the end of this year.



In the absence of an energetic lead from the White House, squabbles have broken out between the Pentagon and the State Department over the extent to which U.S. troops should get involved in catching war criminals and otherwise implementing the Dayton accords.

The struggle to shape Bosnia policy is emerging as a test of the credibility and political skills of Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, a leading proponent of forceful western intervention to end the 3½-year Bosnian war when she was U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Albright has appointed one of the State Department's top troubleshooters, Robert S. Gelbard, to take over from John Kornblum as the administration's Bosnia point man.

Some Bosnia experts in the administration interpret that as a sign Albright favors an activist approach, because Gelbard is regarded as a tough, results-oriented diplomat. "You don't choose Bob Gelbard for such a job if your preferred option is just to muddle through," said a State Department official.

State Department officials have paid tribute to the military for going out of its way to assist civilian authorities with certain aspects of Dayton implementation. Most frequently cited are last summer's Bosnia-wide elections, which NATO troops rescued by transporting ballot boxes, guarding polling stations and providing other support.

However, to the great frustration of most Bosnia experts in the State Department, the military has missed several easy opportunities to grab Karadzic.

As a result, in the words of one Bosnia negotiator, "he has become a walking symbol to the rest of the region that you can defy NATO and get away with it."

Bumpy Ride for Clinton in Mexico

Molly Moore and John Ward Anderson in Mexico City

THE gringo-accented U.S. businessman who introduces himself to radio listeners here as Burton Helms epitomizes all that Mexicans abhor in their northern neighbor: dubious intentions, patronizing arrogance, sly interventionism.

The advertisement — a blatantly nationalistic plea by Mexico's formerly state-run telephone monopoly for customers to shun foreign competitors in the newly privatized telephone market — pokes fun at various U.S. policies considered distasteful to Mexicans, from the Helms-Burton trade sanctions against companies doing business with Cuba to the U.S. drug-certification process for foreign countries.

With its buffoonish gringo character, the ad illustrates the conflicting attitudes Mexicans and Americans sometimes have toward each other and the complex, often contradictory relationship that is evolving between the two countries.

President Clinton arrived on Monday on his first Mexican visit to find a neighbor that seems ambivalent if not antagonistic toward the often overbearing giant to the north. Governmental relations generally are cordial, and relations between Clinton and Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo seem warm, but feelings are cooler on the streets and in the legislatures.

As the United States and Mexico become more culturally, economically and politically intertwined, they are simultaneously more divided over immigration and drug trafficking, with resentment building on both sides of the border. While their fortunes often seem nearly inseparable, there is rarely a sense of shared problems or common future, except in academic circles and at high levels of business and government.

"Clinton comes confident that he is considered a 'friend' because he has rescued us twice, no matter what the [U.S.] Congress thinks," said Marco Rascon, an outspoken congressman from Mexico's leftist opposition party, in a recent newspaper commentary. "Clinton represents those who propose intentionally provoking a crisis in Mexico to generate a 'conditional rescue,' which effectively results in the U.S. imposing its own conditions."

Such bitterness might surprise Clinton, who stuck his neck out to push for passage of the controversial North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); who stitched together a $50 billion bailout when the Mexican peso collapsed in late 1994; and who battled congressional efforts this year to decertify Mexico as a cooperative partner in the campaign against drugs.

But far from receiving plaudits, the United States gets pounded daily in the Mexican press and on the floor of Congress here.

"There's a lot of irritation against the U.S. government," Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution candidate for mayor of Mexico City, said in an interview.

When Mexican officials visited the White House to help plan Clinton's visit, they recommended that he tailor his speeches to winning the support of the Mexican public, partly by drawing a clear distinction between his pro-Mexican attitudes and the supposedly anti-Mexican actions of the U.S. Congress, according to Mexican officials.

Ten bilateral agreements are due to be signed during the visit, the cornerstone of which is the scheduled release of a joint assessment of the drug plague.

How have relations become so ambivalent when NAFTA has boosted U.S.-Mexican trade almost 60 percent in three years, making Mexico the third-largest trading partner of the United States; when the popularity of things Mexican — from food to music to professional baseball players — is booming in the United States; when record numbers of Mexicans and other Hispanics are moving to the United States and exerting more influence over U.S. politics; when Mexican workers in the United States, both legal and not, are sending billions of dollars back to their home country every year?

At the heart of the bumpy U.S.-Mexican relationship are the issues of drugs, immigration and official corruption.

U.S. officials all but ignored the issues of drugs and corruption during the 1988-94 administration of former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who was universally praised in Washington for liberalizing the Mexican economy.

Today, however, with Mexican drug cartels transporting an estimated 70 percent of the cocaine and other illegal drugs consumed in the United States, U.S. officials have been forced to confront the drug problem more vocally. Corruption accompanying the escalating power of the drug mafias is spilling onto the U.S. side of the border.

NAFTA also has many U.S. detractors, who complain that it has opened the border to drug traffickers and illegal immigrants while pushing jobs south to Mexico.

The voter-rich border states of California and Texas, which often suffer the consequences of drug and immigration troubles, drive U.S. policy. On the other side, nationalistic Mexicans expect their president to defend their national dignity and rebuff what they see as U.S. strong-arm tactics and discrimination.

The resulting clash is more often political than ideological. Officials in both countries often have found it easy to blame their neighbor for difficult domestic problems.

Zedillo said last week that many of the most complex issues, including drugs, immigration and free trade, are frequently blurred by "a lot of noise." But the most acrimonious voices come not from the country's leaders or their people, he said, but from extremist politicians and special interest groups.

"It is inevitable that in a relationship as intense and complex as the one we have, that voices which are not necessarily rational are heard from time to time," he said.

Clinton and Republicans in Budget Deal

Eric Pianin and John F. Harris

PRESIDENT Clinton and Republican leaders last week announced agreement on a plan to balance the budget and cut taxes by 2002, ending more than two years of budget warfare and giving both sides political bragging rights.

The agreement makes good on one of the central promises that helped sweep Republicans to power on Capitol Hill in 1994 by setting the federal government on a path to eliminate its annual deficit for the first time since 1969. Clinton, for his part, emerged with commitments for funding on his domestic priorities — most importantly, he said, his plan to expand access to higher education.

"I wanted a balanced budget with balanced values," Clinton said. "I believe we have that today."

"Through this budget we will reach balance by cutting spending, not by raising taxes," Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, said.

The plan, which appears to have strong support in both the House and the Senate, emerged from more than a month of intense give and take by White House and congressional negotiators.

The final disputes over tax cuts and the president's spending initiatives were all but swept aside with the Congressional Budget Office's disclosure that the government would reap $225 billion more in revenues over the next five years than previously projected because of the continued economic boom.

This sudden windfall allowed the White House to quell what looked to be an open revolt by House Democrats, who felt Clinton was abandoning their principles. With the new found funds, there was more than enough for negotiators to pay for $34 billion of Clinton's proposals for expanded health care coverage for low income children, partial restoration of welfare and disability benefits for legal immigrants that were cut out in last year's welfare reform legislation, and educational tax credits and deductions.

Republicans, for their part, were assured of net tax cuts of $85 billion over five years, won major cuts and reforms of Medicare and Medicaid, and dodged a political bullet by scrapping a proposal to pass legislation to reduce the cost of living adjustment for Social Security — a measure that would have been certain to draw the ire of senior citizens.

● The U.S. economic expansion entered its seventh year last month, with the economy growing at its highest rate in a decade, wages outpacing low inflation and a jobless rate continuing to fall. The Labor Department last week reported an unemployment rate of just 4.9 percent in April, the lowest level since 1973.

Zaire Rebels Struggle to Rule in East

James Rupert in Goma

IN THIS postcard-pretty region of lakes and forests near the border with Rwanda, a picture of Zaire's uncertain future has begun to emerge.

The rebel alliance that sprang from eastern Zaire last fall has been sweeping the rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko off the country's map. The rebels have taken more than half the country and now threaten Kinshasa, the capital city 1,000 miles west of here.

But in this region, where the post-Mobutu period is as much as six months old, the rebels headed by Laurent Kabila so far have proved unable to establish themselves securely in everyday administration of civilian power. Residents and foreign analysts say Kabila's alliance has exercised brittle authority through a mix of compromise and repression, and holds limited public support that is likely to evaporate once Mobutu is gone.

Recent events and interviews here suggest that if the rebel alliance becomes the next government of Zaire, it will bring to power an ill-defined mix of authoritarian and democratic tendencies. But they also suggest that the alliance will be unable to form a government by itself — and will have to join other forces to keep the share of power brought by its military successes.

The alliance has vowed that it alone will form a transitional government that will rule for a year after Mobutu's ouster. "If people expect us to have a coalition with other parties, that will not happen," said Mwana Mawampanga, the alliance's top official for finance and economy. "That would paralyze the country. We want to take charge."

Tension, fear and hope are mixed here in Goma. Residents agreed that Kabila's force — called the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire — has won interim political support simply by ending the unbridled theft and abuse of the pro-Mobutu troops who used to rule here.

Still, in the Kivu region, around Goma, the alliance's authority appears to be ensured mainly by military might. They have been unable to establish themselves, at least in part, because they are Tutsis who use militaristic, autocratic ways rather than the give and take of civil rule, and because they have not worked with local organizations that took root despite Mobutu's authoritarianism.

"Power is in the hands of the army officers here," said a Zairian human rights worker. "If someone is arrested and we go to the governor, he says he has no authority" to investigate.

Most people interviewed said the alliance's troops here are effectively an ethnic Tutsi occupation force from the army of neighboring Rwanda. Rwanda — along with Uganda, Angola and Burundi — is backing Kabila's rebellion.

Thousands of the Tutsis who form the core of Kabila's army were born in Kivu and fled to Rwanda amid the turmoil of recent years. But residents said they are convinced that top commanders are Rwandan, partly because "their names are kept hidden," the human rights worker said.

The military presence in Kivu is heavy at least in part because the Tutsi troops continue to wage jungle combat against bands of militant Rwandan Hutu fighters who fled to Zaire in 1994 after losing the civil war in Rwanda. But non-Tutsi residents, who form the majority in Kivu, say some Tutsi soldiers and alliance civilian officials have brandished their new power to seize the property of non-Tutsis with whom they had disputes in the past.

Last week, ethnic tensions shattered Goma's nighttime quiet when two groups of alliance troops — one Tutsi and the other not — fought a gun battle at the office of the alliance's intelligence agency.

Interviews with 20 local residents suggested that Kabila and his alliance will risk losing his limited popular support soon after he wins his battle to oust Mobutu. The change here from the Mobutu to Kabila regimes has "brought relative security and stabilized the currency, which is important," said an official with a Zairian charity organization here. "But it is superficial, not structural."

Residents applauded the alliance for having drastically reduced corruption — although some voiced concern about nepotism by Kabila, who has named relatives to high posts, and other abuses of privilege. For example, Kivu's chamber of commerce complained to the alliance last month that alliance officials do not pay their hotel bills.

Like other Zairian cities and towns, Goma has developed a lively range of political, labor and social organizations that claim a role in public life. And such groups say the alliance has been too authoritarian.

"They have been in power here for six months, and they have not yet started any dialogue with those other groups that were already in place," said a leader of a Goma-based organization that works on political and community development.

Mawampanga suggested that the alliance plans to maintain the ban on other parties under its proposed year-long transitional government. "But that doesn't make it a dictatorship," he said. "During that time [other parties] should go to the library and polish their political programs — and then if they beat us in an election, we will concede."

President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, admire the statue of Franklin Roosevelt's dog during the dedication of a memorial to the former president in Washington last week PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE THEILER

Getting the Army Rogues To Understand the Rules

OPINION
Ellen Goodman

WHAT exactly were they proving at the infamous Aberdeen Proving Ground? When the story broke last fall, a rash of instructors seemed more interested in improving sexual score sheets than in training recruits.

From the very beginning this was labeled an Army "sex scandal" as if the tales were grist for the gossip sheet instead of the criminal blotters. The Maryland Army base became the backdrop for an entire spectrum of behavior from sexual license to sexual harassment to sexual assault.

Now at last the most serious of the verdicts is in. Staff Sgt. Delmar G. Simpson has been found guilty on 18 charges of raping six women. Yet even before the sentencing, a set of nagging questions has surfaced in civilian quarters: Were these military rapes "real" rapes? Is there, should there be, a double standard of sexual misconduct in and out of the Army?

It's fair to say that the American public has learned more about sex and the soldier than we ever wanted to know. We've learned that the Army doesn't consent to consensual sex across ranks. We've learned that adultery is a crime in the military. And we've learned that something called "constructive force" is enough to prove rape.

The six trainees didn't say that the 6-foot-4-inch drill sergeant used physical force. They didn't all resist nor did they all say "no." One had eight encounters with Simpson; another five. It's hard to imagine a woman winning this case in a civilian court.

But if there's a double standard, it may be because the Army is a separate world. In that hierarchical world, after all, a drill sergeant like Simpson was described as a "demigod." In that authoritarian world, he had virtually total control over the trainees' lives. So under military law, fear is a kind of force. It's force that makes this a "real," if less vicious, rape.

Where else is the power structure so obvious as in the military where superiors can order inferiors to do anything, even if it means dying? Where else are enlisted men and women trained to obey without protest and follow orders without question?

The possibilities for sexual abuse by a predator like Simpson, who admitted to sex with 11 trainees, are easy to imagine. So is an environment which the prosecutor described as one of "fear, intimidation and control."

When the trial was over a defense attorney warned that the verdict would undermine the authority of a drill sergeant. Did he believe that the power to order a soldier up the hill was the same as the power to order her into bed?

In turn, one of the women testified, "Each time he did it, I'd just take it. So if I didn't fight him, I knew it wouldn't be long." Did she believe that sex was another order to obey as automatically as if he had asked her to perform 50 push-ups?

The only law comparable to "constructive force" in civilian life is, I suppose, the law of statutory rape. Age too can create such a power imbalance that a child cannot truly "consent." These trainees are not children. But they are at the bottom of the power structure.

But at the same time, I know that we ask the military to walk a fine line. They are expected to kill, but not murder. To prepare for violence, but exercise restraint. We ask for officers who can make others do what they want, but who won't abuse their authority. The performance requires a great and sustained discipline.

So at its heart, this case was never just about men and women in the Army. It's been about rogues and rules. About the use and abuse of power. This isn't what divides the men from the women. It's what divides a disciplined Army in a democracy from an Army that can easily spin way out of control.

Sexual Activity Down Among U.S. Teens

Barbara Vobejda and Judith Havemann

AFTER climbing steadily for more than two decades, sexual activity among American teenagers has declined, the first drop since the federal government began tracking the information in 1970, according to a new government survey released last week.

Among girls aged 15 to 19, the proportion who reported having had sexual intercourse had fallen to 50 percent in 1995 from 55 percent in 1990. A separate federal study showed the figure for boys had dropped to 55 percent in 1995 from 60 percent in 1988.

The national studies also found that teenagers who are sexually active are more likely to use contraceptives than they were in the past, and condom use has increased most dramatically.

Those two changes — fewer teenagers having sex and better contraceptive use — explain why the birth rate among teenagers has fallen since 1991, researchers said.

"We welcome the news that the long-term increase in teenage sexual activity may finally have stopped," said Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala.

While researchers cautioned that teenage birth rates in the United States remain disturbingly high, they said the studies show young people are responding to programs urging them to delay sex and to avoid pregnancy and AIDS.

"I think it is easier for young people to refuse to become sexually involved," said Marion Howard, co-author of a program used in the Atlanta public schools that trains and hires older teenagers to help younger students postpone sex.

"The word about HIV and AIDS has gotten out, and that's contributed" to the decline in sexual activity, she said. "And there's been a willingness of adults to begin to acknowledge that young people are sexual human beings and they need to talk to them."

The National Center for Health Statistics, which conducted the survey, found the proportion of young women saying they had used condoms the first time they had intercourse went from 18 percent in the 1970s to 54 percent in the 1990s.

Researchers have seen a trend of teenage births declining since 1991.

Traders Tell of Starvation in North Korea

Steven Mufson in Dandong, China

ABOUT 200 to 300 trucks a day cross the bridge over the Yalu River here, hauling sacks of food and other desperately needed goods to North Korea. When the traders and drivers return, they carry tales of starvation and desperation in the ailing Stalinist nation.

A group of Chinese truck drivers waiting at the foot of the bridge last month reported they have seen starving children in North Korea. A man who would only give his surname as Re and who was waiting to drive construction supplies to the Chinese Embassy in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, said that on a recent trip he saw one dead child and two other children nearly dead apparently from hunger who were left abandoned by the roadside.

"I've seen schoolchildren staggering like drunkards because they are so hungry," said a trader named Liu, who has a small Chinese medicine shop nearby and who was in North Korea a few days ago. "Kids are coming to towns from the countryside to beg."

Another Chinese trader here, who recently visited relatives and villages in North Korea, said "people are too weak to plant. And even if they could plant, they'd be too weak to harvest."

These are just some of the tales told here in Dandong, a Chinese city facing North Korea across the Yalu River. The most important of four major points for the dwindling trade across the river dividing China and North Korea, Dandong is a good listening post in the effort to measure just how grave a food crisis North Korea faces. Many Chinese and Korean families have relatives on opposite sides of the river. The legal trade is dominated by Chinese citizens who cross over to the North, while North Koreans generally are not allowed to leave their country.

Judging from reports here, the economic situation in North Korea is dire and getting worse. Traders and drivers also tell of idle factories, collapsing agricultural collectives, rampant corruption and political disillusionment. Several hungry refugees have escaped to Dandong, residents say, but were returned after being caught by Chinese authorities. Residents here say some North Korean women sneak over to Dandong and marry any man to become residents and be assured of square meals.

Gauging the gravity of North Korea's crisis is a critical issue as other nations try to decide whether — and how much — to help the Communist-style dictatorship whose planned economy is falling apart.

The floods of the past two years have only compounded woes that have been mounting since the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, North Korea's longtime patron. Foreign governments want to prod North Korea into opening up its closed, repressive society, but they also want to prevent chaos from exploding there.

The United States, eager to lure North Korea into talks over peace and arms, last month announced it was adding $15 million worth of food to earlier announced donations. China said it would donate 70,000 tons of grain in what was seen as an effort to prevent large numbers of famished North Korean refugees from crossing the porous border between the two countries.

The two new donations will cover only about 5 percent of a North Korean grain shortfall that a Beijing-based official of the United Nations' World Food Program estimated recently will be "in the neighborhood of 2.3 million tons" this year. But foreign donors fear that food will find its way to North Korea's influential military, leaving children and other ordinary citizens still hungry.

International aid experts who have visited North Korea also have provided reports of food shortages and disease. In March, Arthur Holcombe, Beijing-based head of the United Nations Development Program, reported cases of rickets and scurvy. One aid group said North Korea admitted that 134 children had died of starvation.

But the personal accounts related by traders from this Chinese city give more graphic images of a nation in crisis.

"Last year it was bad," said Liu's wife. "This year it's worse." She added that among the people she has seen there has been an increase in incidents of typhoid fever and other infectious diseases.

Because of the large numbers of ethnic Koreans who live in China's Liaoning and Jilin border provinces and the numbers of ethnic Chinese who live in North Korea, interest in North Korean affairs runs high here.

"Ordinary people don't believe in the leadership anymore," said Wang Xianhua, a Chinese trader who lived in North Korea until she was 19 and makes selling trips there ranging from two weeks to three months at a time. Wang has a shop packed tight with low-quality "basic" Chinese goods that are difficult to sell to discerning Chinese consumers: cheap rubber boots, sugar-coated peanuts, stale crackers in large plastic bags, and cheap clothing and blankets.

When she goes to the North, the North Koreans pay with Chinese or American currency. Barter, once prevalent, has largely dried up because the North Koreans have little to swap aside from shrimp, prawns and crabs. North Korea's total trade for 1995 was less than a week's worth of South Korea's exports that year.

Wang said that on her visits to the North she sees children too weak to stand without wobbling. She said a relative there said the children were sick. "'They're not sick,' I told her. 'They need to eat,'" Wang said.

Children, her relatives told her, have turned to begging. "Children . . . are dying of hunger," she said. She said she hadn't seen anyone starve, but she has seen children with distended bellies that indicate severe malnutrition.

Wang complained about corruption in China, but she said North Korea is "even more corrupt." She said officials and factory managers are selling factory supplies and equipment on the side, and what scarce food existed has been hidden and sold on the black market.

Red, White and Blue

Dore Ashton

AMERICAN VISIONS: The Epic History of Art in America
By Robert Hughes
Knopf. 635pp. $65

ROBERT HUGHES is no stranger to the art of the epic sweep. He demonstrated his mettle in his monumental history of Australia, The Fatal Shore. He is also no stranger to the world of television documentary. He has used the two-pronged adventure — the eight-part TV series and eight-chapter book — before, in The Shock Of The New. But in this hefty book, Hughes takes on the entire history of America, as seen in its visual arts primarily, from the Pilgrims and Puritans to last year's auctions, and, as can be expected, he blurs the connotations of "epic" as he winds down.

Functioning as an historian not only of the visual arts but of the shifting culture they helped to shape in the past, Hughes is in top form: a master of vivid language, an indefatigable researcher, and a critical intelligence always in high gear, fearlessly demolishing received ideas.

The distancing associated with the epic form serves him well in his earlier chapters, but it disappears in his treatment of contemporary phenomena, which he tends to describe with the editorialist's irritability (not, however, without flashes of characteristic humor).

His combination of TV (the series begins in the US on May 28) and the printed word has certain advantages, which Hughes exploits marvelously. There are no footnotes on the screen, and there is none in the book. Necessity forces him to say what he means and guarantees that he seek the most pithy locution. Out of the ample storehouse of poetic and political quotations that he seems to have at his fingertips, he chooses with great care, letting a line from Whitman or Williams or Auden cast an effulgent light on an entire chapter. Here we have a master of *belles lettres* at work in cultural history, a genre that Hughes may have invented — and a good thing, too.

Hughes is in top form: a master of vivid language, and a critical researcher always in high gear

In concert with many historians, Hughes recognizes that the Puritan legacy "has formed all modern Americans, no matter what the color their skin or their ancestors' place of origin." The American work ethnic, the primacy of religion, and the invention of American "newness" are all attributed to those grim settlers, who, as Hughes underlines, were also ruthless and violent: "These men of God were killers on a biblical scale: before 1615 about seventy-two thousand Native Americans lived between southern Maine and the Hudson River, and by 1690 most of them had been wiped out and the rest beaten down."

Hughes also corrects a common belief that the Puritan culture was puritan: "narrowly art-hating and repressively pleasure-denying." Their art forms, primarily architectural and decorative, were signs of wealth and status, as American art forms have been ever since.

American "newness" is one of the principal motifs in Hughes's book, and he takes it from Jefferson's 1801 letter ("We can no longer say there is nothing new under the sun. For this whole history of man is new. The great extent of our republic is new . . .") to the solecisms that fueled the naked imperial ambitions of our 19th-century politicos and their allies in the world of the arts.

Hughes sharply defines the rhetoric and enthusiasts of Manifest Destiny in the mid-19th century, pointing out that they had in mind not only Latin America, the Pacific and Asia, but an American "leap into history" that meant empire. A host of American painters bought into the myth of Manifest Destiny, painting the big picture of the wilderness and diminishing, if not altogether obliterating, the presence of the original members of this "new" paradise, the American Indians.

Hughes's chapter on early modernism is exceptionally well-hewn and rich in detail. He tells the familiar story, for example, of the 1913 Armory Show in all its glorious confusion, but he manages to open a fresh vein of thought by highlighting the participation of the elderly Albert Pinkham Ryder. He was presented as a secular saint by the show's organizers and prominently displayed. Despite his many shortcomings, which Hughes thoroughly reviews (his poor technique, feeble drawing and general sentimentality, except in the marine paintings), Ryder seemed to the dispirited American modernists a kind of native prophet, the only painter who could sound an authentic "American" note.

Ryder is among a dozen artists to whom Hughes devotes his critical energies. Others are John Singer Sargent (not as bad as we thought), Winslow Homer (a lot better than we thought), Georgia O'Keeffe (truly flawed), and Frank Lloyd Wright (a giant).

These miniature monographs are excellent, as are some of his thumbnail judgments. Take Mabel Dodge Luhan: "a mystagogue and an egotist, a sexual imperialist and much of the time an intolerable bitch as well, but there was something undeniably impressive about her and she fought hard and valiantly for the cause of Indian rights."

Or the late William de Kooning: "One sees him as the consummate anti-Duchamp, a permanent relief from overtheorized art and from excess self-conscious irony, a man exhilaratingly in touch with the body of paint and the body of the world."

Although Hughes has scathing thoughts about vulgar political correctness, I doubt he would have given so much serious consideration to two major black artists, Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence, without recent social and political pressures.

Hughes's closing remarks are almost uniformly pessimistic about our moral and aesthetic condition, and he ends his book — as he says, with regret — with two quotations. The first is from W.B. Yeats — "the best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity" — and the second, which, he notes, is equally durable — Scarlett O'Hara's "tomorrow is another day."



WOODCUT BY J F LABOURER

Plate Heaped High With Love

Nancy McKeon

NEVER EAT YOUR HEART OUT
By Judith Moore
Farrar Straus Giroux. 328pp. $23

ANYONE can march into a fast-food joint, call out an order and get fed. Chowing down at an intimate dinner party is a much subtler proposition. First you have to absorb the mood and atmosphere and then figure out how worldly or down-home to act. And for that you look to your hostess, especially if you don't know her well.

So who is this Judith Moore, who has gathered us here to read Never Eat Your Heart Out, an idiosyncratic combination of memoir, mea culpa and food reporting?

Well, with the book's first sentence, in the chapter "Pie," we learn she's not a food writer of the Mom-made-great-green-beans genre. Listen: "Its filling sequestered beneath a canopy of top crust, hidden from the eye (if not the nose), a pie (not unlike the body) offers itself for reverie on the enigma of inside and out." Indeed! And exactly whom do we encounter in this chapter? It's the author as a solitary toddler, soberly rolling out mud pies for her dolls — "even incontinent Betsy-Wetsy, who left wet spots wherever she sat" — mostly done under the watchful eye of the housekeeper.

The curly-headed 2- or 3-year-old pictured on the cover is smiling delightedly, but this little girl who once tucked a dead baby robin inside a mud crust to mimic the chicken pie being made in the kitchen seems nothing if not serious in all endeavors.

But she's not that child of privilege for long. Those cushions are pulled out from under her when her mother, a brittle, self-absorbed opera singer, throws Dad and his law books out. It's in "Breakfast" that we witness the querulous (and never forgiven) mother turn the inconvenient nursery-schooler over to her own mother. On the morning they're leaving for the nasty older woman's farm, the grandmother force-feeds Moore oatmeal until the bowl is empty. "The oatmeal rises up and out my lips and splashes into the bowl, onto the newspaper, the table, down my dress front. My grandmother slaps me."

"Memories," the author says, "come back to you in your mouth." Whenever she is sick, she feels "stuffed with sorrow."

Sorrowful and pent-up "wild" are what Moore becomes. We follow her from hardscrabble farming during World War II, where with one violent stroke smiling hogs become breakfast bacon, to living with her mother, who is more interested in breaking up homosexual couples by having wild sex with one partner, to living on a shoestring in a series of sad rented houses with a husband still in graduate school and two babies before she is 20. It's not hard poverty, she points out, "poverty you knew would never end. This was exile."

But exile from what exactly? Not, as she seems to think at that point, from the privileged side of middle-class life in small-town Washington state. That is suffocating, although Moore is quick to claim her WASP bona fides as a pot-luck-supper-attending member of Calvary Episcopal. No, she seems to be in exile from herself. Which is why, after "Adultery," the chapter in which she describes the love she made and the elaborate dishes she prepared during the happiest year of her life, comes "Dusk," in which she draws the sad outlines of the divorced and the solitary supermarket-shopping for their lonely evening meals. For she has left the car at the train station and run away from home, from her husband and two little girls.

'Memories come back to you in your mouth,' the author says. When she is sick, she feels 'stuffed with sorrow'

Because this really is life, not a novel, Moore's escape solves nothing. She does become a writer and editor, but she and her Jack remain married, living in different states, coming together for comfort, for vacations, to feel the tension of the bond Moore broke, for which she was forgiven but which has never quite healed.

What gives the book a somewhat jerky quality as it progresses through Moore's life are set pieces — "Turkey Sex," "Cranberry Blood and a Sad Motel," "Eating Peter Rabbit." These are straight food essays that seem designed to be like a TV commercial break between the heavy emotional sledding of the main narrative. Oddly, these are the less rewarding chapters. Or maybe not so oddly. Moore's point is that food makes memories, so how can snappy facts and historical allusions convey food's true power?

The wilderness that Moore extols and regrets in herself led her to mirror in some ways the self-absorbed life of her own mother. When she walked out on the husband she betrayed and the two little girls she so desperately loved (and loves), did she scream the way her mother did? Perhaps not, but we don't really know. "Eventually I packed up and left home" is what we're told. As precise as Moore is in describing the secret life of a spud ("Down in the pot's dark interior the tubers will quietly lead their own genetically encoded potato lives"), she is often elliptical about the details of her own perhaps genetically encoded life. Most of the tangible autobiographical data about Moore (that she lives in Berkeley, that she is an editor and writer for the San Diego Reader) are to be found on the book jacket, not in the pages of the book.

It seems especially sad that her wildness, when released, blossomed into hard work and graceful, serious prose. Why did something so worthy have to cause so much pain? Here the elliptical nature of her memoir works against her. It's clear she wants absolution, from Jack, from us. But she wants it on her terms. In her understated way, she makes it a character flaw that her husband "has not suffered an 'identity crisis' . . . He casts for trout in the same streams where his great-grandfather cast. In the eighth grade he used a desk into whose wood his father had carved initials . . . If you ask, 'What are you thinking about?' he says, believing he tells the truth, 'Nothing.' His hands rarely tremble. "Although I know people like him, what he has isn't catching. I tried."

It seems an ungenerous touch in a book that is generous in so many ways. But our hostess is clearly a complicated character, and the flaws in editing and changes in tone aside, it is rewarding to spend time in her company.

Insurance industry faces $300 billion bill for dying smokers

Paul Murphy and
Lisa Buckingham

INSURANCE companies around the world, including Commercial Union and Royal Sun Alliance in Britain, face the prospect of having to pick up a $300 billion compensation bill for smoking-related deaths.

Painstaking research by a lone City of London financial analyst, Paul Hodges of investment bank Schroders, has thrown up the existence of scores of product liability policies quietly taken out by the big cigarette companies, such as Philip Morris in America and BAT Industries in Britain, over the past 60 years. While most of these policies contain exclusion clauses, previously thought to rule out claims from victims of smoking-related illnesses, Mr Hodges's work has shown that the poor wording of the clauses has granted the tobacco firms the chance to offload just about all their liabilities.

Recent talks in Washington between the world's big tobacco groups and a plethora of litigants, working towards a global out-of-court settlement of all smoking-related claims, have indicated that cigarette-makers may be prepared to set aside a total of $300 billion for victims, with payments staged over the next over 25 years.

Two research notes published by Mr Hodges, which, for example, name the 46 insurance companies that issued policies to BAT, have received a limited circulation around the City. But the implications of the analysis have already been noted in the United States, where the State of Louisiana, which is suing a string of tobacco companies for the costs incurred by the public health authorities in treating dying smokers, has now extended its litigation to cover more than 100 insurance companies named as providing coverage for tobacco companies.

Aside from providing a fresh headache for big companies such as Royal, Zurich Insurance and Allianz of Germany, the affair is set to produce another crisis at the Lloyd's of London insurance market, which previously thought it had ring-fenced all potential smoking-related claims.

In Canada, the local division of Britain's best-known cigarette manufacturer, Imperial Tobacco, has already begun preliminary legal action against Commercial Union and American Home Assurance.

Details of the awesome liability faced by insurance companies have been slow to emerge since tobacco firms, in a secret pact, have agreed to keep silent about the scale of the insurance cover they have taken out.

One source in the US industry admitted that all the large companies have sworn not to disclose the extent of any insurance cover.

The tobacco companies are a long way from making a claim on their insurers, as they have yet to lose a substantial case. But lawsuits scheduled to come to court this year, including several by US state attorneys seeking to recover medical insurance costs, look more threatening.

The cigarette makers — whose settlement plans would all but eliminate their US earnings for 25 years — want to keep discussion of their insurance cover under wraps for fear they will help the underwriters' defence if they meet in court.

Although the insurance industry maintains that policy restrictions mean claims are unlikely to be met, experts argue that many policies were written so long ago — in the 1930s and 1940s — that these exemptions are next to worthless.

Comment, page 16

Will strong pound confound Labour?

Mark Milner and **Larry Elliott** ask if the Blair government can escape the currency crises that befell previous Labour administrations

FOR students of Labour history, it all had a familiar ring. Once the size of Tony Blair's majority became apparent, the money men on the foreign exchanges started to dump sterling. As the last revellers from the South Bank were staggering bleary-eyed to the Tube stations in mid-morning, the pound was down by three pfennigs against the German mark and two cents against the dollar.

Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan all knew what it was like to see the currency disappear off the edge of a cliff. But despite the post-election wobble, Mr Blair may escape the same fate. Labour may have its sterling crisis, but on current form it is more likely to be forced on him by currency strength, not weakness.

This is an argument that seems to fly in the face of common sense. After all, disaster and devaluation have been the dark twins in the economic lexicons of successive Labour governments. It was the row over spending cuts aimed at propping up the pound which split the Labour party asunder in 1931. That brought in the National Government, which then proceeded to an immediate about-face by taking Britain off the Gold Standard.

Stafford Cripps, chancellor in the Attlee government formed after the second world war, was the next victim of the double-D. He reluctantly sanctioned the 1949 devaluation from a sanatorium in Switzerland, having repeatedly denied any plans to do so. For a high Anglican of great moral rectitude like Cripps, such a move was painful in the extreme. There was a political price too. In the election six months later, Labour saw its massive majority of 146 slashed to five.

Think next of the mid-1960s, Harold Wilson, perhaps Britain's most economically literate prime minister, never recovered from the ridicule heaped on him for his "pound in your pocket" speech. A decade on it was the turn of Mr Callaghan's chancellor, Denis Healey. In 1976 Mr Healey was on his way to Heathrow for a meeting of the International Monetary Fund in Washington when he had to be recalled to battle with yet another sterling crisis. Mr Healey did not go to the IMF; the IMF came to him.

The misery, however, has not been all Labour's. Just ask John Major. It was he who in the autumn of 1992 poured scorn on those who called for Britain's withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism, accusing them of peddling "quack doctor remedies". Within six days, Britain had been forced out of the ERM, the Government's economic policy was in ruins and the Conservative party was on course for last week's wipe-out at the polls.

With such a history it can be little surprise that one of the axioms of foreign exchange dealers is: "No one ever got sacked for selling sterling."

Yet over the past few months, no one has been flogging the pound. The polls have been pointing to that traditional City "sell" signal — a Labour victory — but investors have been piling into the UK currency. Never mind, say the foreign exchange bears. Normal service will soon be resumed, and as spring turns to summer the pound will start to sink like a stone. But will it? Could the pound be about to change from sick man to safe haven and join that other underperforming currency — the dollar — as one of the buys of the next millennium?

Few on the foreign exchanges would be prepared to embrace such a radical rethink. But in one crucial sense, the pessimists are already living in the past. Sterling's really precipitous decline against the German mark, for example, occurred in the first half of the 1970s when Britain's inflation rate undermined the value of the currency. It was worth just under 9 marks in 1970 but had plunged to below 4 during the sterling crisis of 1976. The decline against the French franc was almost equally steep. Sterling opened the decade at more than 13 francs, but by 1976 it was below 8.

Since then, however, things have not been so bad. True, the pound has had its ups and down; Black Wednesday — September 16, 1992 — particularly springs to mind. Sterling, however, is now above its 1976 level against the franc and has lost a quarter of its value against the mark. On a trade-weighted basis, sterling's recent rally has carried it to its 1976 level.

One reason for this is that the pound has been rising on the foreign exchanges for the past year, moving up from 2.18 marks last spring to just over 2.80 last week. This movement has been accompanied by moans and groans from exporters, who have complained that they are being priced out of overseas markets. The smart money says that the pound is defying gravity. But there is a case for saying that what we are seeing is a profound change in sentiment towards the pound.

Kevin Gardiner, chief UK economist for Morgan Stanley, said: "At the moment we are saying that the pound's rise is cyclical rather than structural. But we don't feel that with any great conviction."

Much of the market queasiness about sterling — as Mr Gardiner and other analysts freely admit — is down to history. And when it comes to currency dealing, sentiment matters, at least in the short term.

But over the medium and long term, it has not been the whim of speculators but the hard facts of economic life behind the steady depreciation of sterling. If the fundamentals of the economy have improved, the currency will almost certainly increase in value.

The markets have belatedly also woken up to the idea that the single European currency is likely to be softer than the mark, and the European Central Bank less hawkish on inflation than the Bundesbank. Sterling will remain attractive, particularly if Mr Blair uses his big parliamentary majority to fulfil his pre-election commitment to keep inflation under lock and key. Political stability, an open economy that offers liquidity to investors, and low inflation suggest that the pound may continue to be a buy.

The weaknesses of the pound — history apart — come down to the UK's ability to sustain its current performance. If inflation continues to be higher than that in France and Germany, the result will be a loss of competitiveness, and in the past that has been compensated for by allowing the currency to depreciate. The UK's decision to stay outside a single currency that proved harder than expected might exacerbate this trend.

But what about the opportunities and threats? In some respects, these are two sides of the same coin. A stronger pound affords the opportunity to lock in low inflation, and force UK companies to compete on the basis of quality and product innovation rather than on price. Holidaymakers will find travel abroad cheaper and it would encourage overseas investment.

The counter-case is that a high exchange rate would lock Britain into a low-growth scenario. By choking off exports and encouraging imports, the balance of payments would come under pressure, forcing the authorities to run a deflationary macro-economic policy in order to prevent inflation rising.

Even if there is weakening of sterling from its current level, the idea of it plunging to the post-Black Wednesday lows of 1995 seems far-fetched. So the odds must be on Mr Blair avoiding the fate of his illustrious predecessors and being skewered by the falling pound. He is more likely to have to battle with the consequences of its strength.

One warning, however. Mr Blair and his Chancellor, Gordon Brown, must beware the curse of September, the month not only of Black Wednesday, but also coming off the Gold Standard, the Cripps devaluation and the 1976 crisis. For the pound, September has always been the cruellest month.

Going up?

Pound against Dm (RH scale)
Pound against Dollar (LH scale)
LH scale: 0, 2, 3, 4 — RH scale: 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
1946, 1950, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995
Source: Bank of England

In Brief

THE US economy grew at a blistering pace in the first quarter, its fastest rate in more than nine years, making it almost certain that the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates as part of its pre-emptive anti-inflation strategy.

MULTI-MILLIONAIRE businessman Geoffrey Robinson, the new Paymaster-General, is to take on the high-profile job of motivating economic growth as well as overseeing the tricky Private Finance Initiative and privatisation portfolios.

EURO DISNEY showed a net loss for the six months to March 31, its traditional low season, of $36 million, compared with a loss of $29 million for the first half of 1995-96.

PETER LARGE, the Hambros banker behind the aborted takeover bid for the Co-op, asked to be suspended until the investigation into the affair has been completed.

BRITAIN'S largest cable telephone and television group, Cable & Wireless Communications, was valued at just under $7 million when trading started in its shares.

FIDELITY Brokerage, the British offshoot of the huge US fund manager, has been fined $324,000 plus costs of $263,000 by regulators for the breakdown of its share-dealing system.

THE Sears retailing empire, which includes Selfridges, Dolcis and Freemans, is being broken up, nearly 70 years after the late Sir Charles Clore started piecing it together. Only the shop names will survive.

THE British Airports Authority is set to seal a $1 billion deal to run Melbourne airport, the second largest in Australia, creating a bridgehead for the company in the Pacific Rim. The authority confirmed it was also bidding for Naples as well as Bali airports, and several in the US and South Africa.

Expat parents pin hopes on Labour

The British Conservatives, plagued by the nationalistic element within their party, have done nothing to help those who work in Europe, writes **Peter Kingston**

FOR schools offering a British style of education overseas, Labour's spectacular election triumph last week is welcome news.

It brings renewed, but cautious hope that expatriate Britons might at last be granted a benefit which has long been enjoyed by other nationals who settle abroad with their families — namely subsidised education for their children.

And for those British schools situated in European Union countries, the demolition of the Conservative party promises welcome relief from years of background Europhobia and jingoism which reached a climax during the election.

Although school principals say that the antics of the loudest Tory Europhobes and of their supporters in the media have not really impinged on the reputations or operations of British schools abroad, they have inevitably proved embarrassing on occasions. But fortunately the types of parents favouring a British education for their children are also likely to be informed and cosmopolitan enough to put the anti-European tendencies into perspective.

Unlike French, German, Scandinavian and Japanese schools abroad, which receive financial support from their respective governments, British schools get no official assistance. This makes it much more difficult for British nationals to work overseas. Those British parents who are on more modest incomes or whose employers can't — or won't — help with school fees are often unwilling to take up posts abroad because they cannot afford to bring their children with them and put them into a familiar educational system.

After years of steadily lobbying Conservative governments about the importance of subsidising the education of British expatriate children to enable them to go to British schools in the countries where their parents have been posted, the Council of British Independent Schools in the European Communities (Cobisec) — for the second time in a decade — saw its hopes dashed again, during the Major administration's dying months.

British independent schools in the EU believe Labour may give grants to expats

The Tories' final education bill omitted a clause — proposed by Cobisec — which would have facilitated the setting up of an Educational Grant Scheme. This, according to Sir Dick Pantlin, president of Cobisec, would have enabled more people on middle management-level salaries, and those whose employers could not contribute towards the cost of education, to take up job offers overseas with obvious benefit to the British economy.

By contrast, Sir Dick feels he was given an appreciably more hopeful reception from Labour when he approached the party six years ago. A couple of Labour figures he prefers not to name, then much less senior than they are now, encouraged him to think Labour would be sympathetic to Cobisec's case.

Although he stresses the need to be cautious before pinning too many hopes on Labour setting up a grant scheme, Sir Dick said: "It is my strong personal belief that David Blunkett, the Labour education spokesman, will study this matter with Cobisec."

Over the past year, through its member schools, Cobisec has been urging expatriate British parents with children at its schools to register to vote in the general election. The proxy method available to expats, in which nominees in the UK cast votes on their behalf, has always proved a disincentive to voting. Cobisec's implied dissatisfaction with the Tories and its better expectations of Labour were conveyed to parents in a letter Sir Dick sent them.

It is not yet known how many of the parents Cobisec targeted did vote, or whether their votes had any effect.

Jennifer Bray, principal of the British School of Brussels, said: "Of the 250 or so sets of British parents with children at the school, according to the last poll I took a week ago, only about 20 per cent had registered to vote."

Hostility back in Britain to Europe could usually be "shrugged off" in social situations by staff, she said. It did not really affect the students.

"Many of our students, British or otherwise, who do visit England can't wait to get back to Europe simply because they have a better education, more affluent lifestyle and more interesting things to do."

Many German parents favour the more personal approach of British teachers

Similar attitudes can be detected among students at the British Embassy Preparatory School in Bonn, where a third of the 223 pupils are British, its principal, Peter Ward, said. When they are dispatched to stay with relatives in the UK they often hanker for the greater affluence of their parents' homes in Bonn.

"These are often internationally mobile parents and clearly their children don't have the typical nationalistic feelings," he said.

When British youngsters return with their families to live in the UK, they have sometimes found it difficult to integrate. "Socially they find it a problem because they come up against anti-European and anti-German feelings — they get called Nazi because they've lived here."

Ironically, the view from Britain, sometimes fuelled by critics of British state schools, that the German education system is uniformly superior is not always shared by German parents, said Mr Ward.

Although anti-German sentiment in Britain of the sort so wretchedly exploited by the Conservatives' poster showing Tony Blair perched on Chancellor Kohl's knee does not do any favours to those promoting British education in Germany, it has not dented numbers of German parents seeking places in his school.

These parents favour the more personal approach by teachers in the British method and their sense of responsibility for pupils' understanding of what is being taught. "In the German system, a teacher is employed to stand up and deliver a lesson, and that's it. If a child doesn't understand, it's the parents' responsibility to do something about it," Mr Ward said.

Generally, the British schools' aim appears to be to give pupils a sense of their place as Europeans. Martin Honour, the principal of the British School of Paris, said that his own four children have gained the knack of "standing back and making an informed view of what they see, wherever they are".

Being educated outside Britain has given them the sense to appreciate the best of the countries they visit. "Although they regard themselves as British they have sufficient objectivity to say that certain things are done better in France," he said.

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Abbreviations: P - Professor; AP - Associate Professor; ASP - Assistant Professor; SL - Senior Lecturer; L - Lecturer; AL - Assistant Lecturer; STI - Senior Technical Instructor

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ACU

Promoting educational co-operation throughout the Commonwealth

Publications Officer

Global TB Programme, World Health Organization Geneva, Switzerland

The Global Tuberculosis Programme of the World Health Organization, based in Geneva, is seeking a high-caliber, results-oriented individual to plan and manage the preparation of advocacy and health education materials to help reverse the world's tuberculosis epidemic. Currently, nearly 3 million people are dying from TB each year, in spite of the fact that an effective and affordable cure exists. An experienced communicator is needed by the Programme's advocacy team to be responsible for creating materials that effectively present the severity of the TB epidemic and successfully promote the use of the DOTS strategy for controlling TB.

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4. **Team work, problem-solving abilities** and the temperament to handle extensive redrafting of materials is required. The candidate must also be able to skillfully manage demanding publication timelines and work resourcefully within limited budgets.
5. **Editing and writing abilities**, as well as capacity to persuasively communicate technical issues to a popular audience are required.
6. **Other public relations experience is desirable**, as is an international health or development background. Video production, multimedia, media relations, NGO relations, grant-writing and fundraising experience would be useful, although not required for this position.
7. **University degree or equivalent.**

For more information on the Global TB Programme, please visit the Programme's web site: http://www.who.ch/programmes/GTB_Homepage.html

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School of Social Sciences and Law

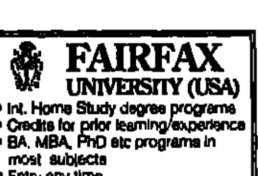
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Further details and application forms are available from the Personnel Office, Highfield House, The University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD.
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CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE



Social realism in soft focus

Bo Widerberg

MENTION the name of the Swedish film director Bo Widerberg, who has died aged 66, and most people will conjure up sensuous, soft-focus colour photography and the slow movement from Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21 in Elvira Madigan (1967), which accompanies the tragic romance between a married nobleman (Thommy Berggren) and a tightrope walker (Pia Degermark), who elope to spend a last summer together before committing suicide.

Yet Widerberg first made his name with his second feature, Raven's End (1963). Its social realism seemed to mark a new trend away from the cerebral and visceral works of Ingmar Bergman that had dominated Swedish cinema for over a decade. It starred Berggren, the director's alter-ego, as a young would-be writer, living with his drunken father and worn-out mother in Malmö in 1936 during the Depression. The film was semi-autobiographical.

He left school early, and worked at various jobs before taking up writing — he wrote most of his screenplays as well as four novels, short stories and a radio play — and became a film critic.

Elvira Madigan brought him his widest international success. It won Degermark the Best Actress Award at Cannes, and altered the perception critics had of Widerberg's work, though he saw the film as a social critique. The lovers, shunned by the 19th century Swedish society, enjoy a bucolic idyll before their passion ends in death. Some critics regarded the film as an overblown cigarette commercial, while others found this affirmation in the face of death unbearably moving.

Widerberg returned to working-class life in the 1930s with Adalen 31 (Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1969), though this time in sun-kissed, dappled colour images. It told of the hardships of a working-class family during a lengthy strike at a paper mill in a small town in Sweden, which ends with five workers being killed by soldiers.

He used a similar lyricism in The Ballad Of Joe Hill (1971) to celebrate the Swedish-American union leader. It was a romantic approach to proletarian history and very much a product of the 1960s. Worldwide success eluded Widerberg in the years that followed. Meanwhile he made several stylish *policiers* with political messages, such as The Man On The Roof (1976) — in which a tough policeman is killed by a sniper in Stockholm — and The Man From Majorca (1984) in which he points a finger at police methods and political corruption.

One of his last films was the Oscar-nominated All Things Fair, set in Malmö in 1943, when a 15-year-old boy experiences his first love affair with his teacher, a woman 22 years his senior. Sensuous as it was, it could never replace the affection that Elvira Madigan had with the public — the berry juice and cream on Elvira's fingers, the butterfly hunt in slow motion, and that Mozart.

Ronald Bergan

Bo Widerberg, film director, born June 8, 1930; died May 1, 1997

Lord Taylor: 'unstuffy, occasionally sardonic, but never sarcastic' PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Fair face of British justice

Lord Taylor of Gosforth

GOOD judges die young. They agonise, they lose sleep over the sentences they pass, they suffer the stress of trying to move the justice monolith a fraction of an inch forward. Peter Taylor's death from cancer at the age of 66 has deprived the nation of good leadership and good judgment from the first Lord Chief Justice to see himself as accountable not only to the law, but to the public as well.

The greatest of Peter Taylor's many achievements was to restore faith in the criminal justice system after scientific developments — DNA, ESDA testing and the like — had exposed major miscarriages of justice which had taken place in the 1970s. Appointed Lord Chief Justice in 1988, he determined to slough off the judicial complacency of the Hailsham era, and to apply with greater strictness the rules and principles designed to avoid wrongful convictions.

Towards the end of his life, he was called upon to play a political role which he regretted, but undertook with true courage. The Government abandoned principle in simplistic pursuit of the "law and order" vote, with measures which would involve much heavier punishment than would fit the facts of some crimes, and which would give politicians arbitrary rights to increase sentences.

These measures were blatantly in breach of the constitutional rule of separation of powers. But Britain has no written constitution, and Michael Howard's proposals were sufficiently popular to mute criticism from a timid opposition. Lord Taylor stepped into the breach, throwing the weight of the judiciary behind the propositions that criminals should be treated fairly, and that failure to catch them is generally the fault of clueless policemen, not clever lawyers or liberal judges.

Peter Taylor was born in 1930, the son of a Newcastle doctor who had emigrated to escape the pogroms of eastern Europe. He attended Newcastle Royal Grammar School and Pembroke College, Oxford, and was called to the Bar in 1954. He was appointed a High Court judge in 1980.

He will be remembered as fondly for his good humour as for his good judgments; he was unstuffy, occasionally sardonic, but never sarcastic at the expense of litigants and defendants.

Peter Taylor made his mark, as barrister and silk, with an unusual combination of academic excellence and powerful, incisive cross-examination. Aficionados of that art rate his interrogation of George Pottinger, the brilliant but bent head of the Scottish Office, as one of the most devastating cross-examinations of the century.

As a judge, Taylor immediately showed qualities of humanity and independence. He granted bail to several of the Bradford 12 — young Pakistanis mistakenly treated as terrorists when they made (and then abandoned) petrol bombs in fear of an attack on their community by the National Front.

In 1984, he became the first judge in English history to make the security services account for themselves, when he directed MI5 to justify its behaviour in tapping the telephones of CND. This was a revolutionary step: judges had always permitted the Government to get away with whatever it chose to cloak under the blanket defence of national security.

By 1988, Taylor was the obvious choice for Chief Justice. He determined that his Court of Appeal should, so far as humanly possible, produce rules which would protect the possibly innocent.

Many judges begin with similar ideals and soon become cynical. Taylor, to his everlasting credit, never became case-hardened. When government interference was to blame, as in several of the Iraqgate prosecutions highlighted by the Scott inquiry, Taylor's condemnations were ferocious.

Last year he had to postpone hearing the Ordtech appeal while his beloved wife was dying: he said he was too blind with weeping to read the documents that the Government had wrongly withheld from the trial. After her funeral he returned to read the documents, appreciate their relevance and allow the appeal.

Peter Taylor's contribution to the development of criminal law in the last eight years was immense. It has been a most difficult era, requiring a delicate balance between the demands for fair trial and the need for the state to protect valuable criminal informants and to use in evidence fruits of electronic surveillance. His judgments have struck this balance, not always successfully but by genuine attempts to be fair.

He will also be remembered for the farsightedness of his report on the Hillsborough Stadium disaster, and for his attempt to abolish wigs (which failed as a result of opposition from barristers addicted to this pantomime flummery).

He was a private man whose achievements owed much to the emotional sustenance he drew from a close and loving family. It is the saddest of ironies that one who did so much to bring fairness into the lives of others should have his own unfairly and arbitrarily cut short.

Geoffrey Robertson

Peter Murray Taylor, Lord Taylor of Gosforth, judge, born May 1, 1930; died April 28, 1997

Pilot of Indian independence

Biju Patnaik

BIJU PATNAIK, who has died in Delhi aged 81, was one of the fast dwindling band of Indian politicians who took part in the independence movement.

Inspired, when he was just 11 years old, by meeting Mahatma Gandhi, Patnaik joined the freedom movement as a young man. However, he did not follow the example of those "freedom fighters" who sought jail during the wartime Quit India movement by making fiery speeches demanding an immediate end to British rule. Patnaik went to jail — fortunately, because it became an almost essential qualification for a political career in independent India — but by a very different route.

It appeared that he had joined the British when he enlisted as a pilot in the Royal Indian Air Force, and acquired a reputation for courage bordering on recklessness during the Burma campaign against the Japanese. He was in transport command and made landings which other pilots would have refused to make to rescue British families trapped by the advancing Japanese. But at the same time he was dropping leaflets to troops in the Indian army urging them to forget their loyalty to the British, and ferrying leaders of the Indian National Congress to secret meetings. He did little to hide these activities and so it came as no surprise when he was court-martialled and imprisoned. Patnaik was not released from jail until 1946 when the war was over.

After independence Patnaik returned to his derring-do flying, carrying troops into Kashmir when that state was in danger of being overrun by Pakistan in 1947, and then intervening in the Indonesian independence struggle. At the same time, he started a successful business career, which made him unusual among Indian politicians by giving him an independent income. One of his ventures was to found an airline, which was later merged with the nationalised Indian Airlines.

It was India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who gave Patnaik his big break in politics. Patnaik had reorganised the Congress party in the eastern state of Orissa (his home state), and enabled it in 1961 to win back power from a conglomeration of politicians dominated by former maharajas. Nehru was so impressed that after the body-blow of the Chinese army's penetration across India's Himalayan borders in 1962, he summoned Patnaik to Delhi.

Patnaik was given an office near to Nehru's, and entrusted with secret missions, many of them concerned with attempts to revive the armed forces' and indeed the nation's morale by re-arming with America's help.

In 1965 he opposed Indira Gandhi becoming prime minister and was sent to jail again for two years when she arrested her prominent opponents and declared a state of emergency in 1975. Patnaik became a minister in the Janata party government which followed Indira Gandhi's.

Bu it wasn't until her son Rajiv was assassinated in the middle of the 1991 general election that Patnaik's political career revived. He led the campaign in Orissa, won a convincing victory over the Congress and became chief minister of the state for the second time.

The electorate demanded a price from him in the 1996 election to the state assembly, choosing Congress to rule Orissa again. Patnaik hoped that his party, which was by then the Janata Dal, would take him into the coalition government in Delhi, but he was disappointed.

Patnaik came from an aristocratic family. He married and had three children. His only daughter is the writer Gita Mehta.

Mark Tully

Bijoyananda (Biju) Patnaik, pilot and politician, born March 5, 1916; died April 17, 1997



Top of the world . . . Alain Robert after scaling the Tour de Montparnasse in Paris PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK SPOONER

Vertigo? No problem for Spiderman

What makes Alain Robert want to climb tall buildings, asks **Ed Douglas**

YOU'LL recall Spiderman, the darker confrère of Superman whose costume was slightly less buffoonish but whose demons were more often in his head than out there on the streets of Metropolis. Both superheroes, curiously, took jobs in the media.

Now there is a new Spiderman out there, crawling up the glass and steel precipices of the world's great cities, righting wrongs — or at least feeling anxious about wrongs — and defying death before admiring crowds. His latest stunt was to inch his way up the 32-storey Sabah Foundation Building in the Malaysian city of Kota Kinabalu with no rope or other safety device to stop him smacking into the pavement should he lose his grip. Had he done so, then CNN would have made sure that his end would be very, very public.

When not playing poker with the Grim Reaper, Spiderman returns to street-level as a 34-year-old Frenchman from the Ardèche called Alain Robert. He is fantastically French, a cross between Serge Gainsbourg and a gecko. He is also short, barely 5ft 2in, which may explain his strange mixture of chippiness and bravura, a personality trait exacerbated by his aristocratic but impoverished origins.

Robert has made it his life's mission to tour the globe wowing city-dwellers with his jaunts up skyscrapers and irritating the local constabulary. He has done time on four continents, including in New York where dozens of fellow inmates broke into applause when he appeared on television news scaling the Empire State Building.

He was led away from that climb in handcuffs but not before making a brief statement to the throng of reporters. "I did this climb to show my opposition to racial discrimination and the genocide of native Americans," he announced, which must have gone down well with the NYPD.

Like the original Spiderman Robert has a penchant for costumes, dressing in New York in an Indian-style waistcoat. "It's my look," he says. "Sometimes I dress as a cowboy as well. Really, I never stopped playing cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers. And then the Indians have suffered terribly, which disgusts me. I love all people, whatever race they are."

It isn't enough for Robert simply to climb these things because they are there. He has used his climbs to offer his thoughts on all manner of issues from racism to Aids, and is reported to have raised $150,000 for charity with his latest climb. Clinging to the sides of buildings is his way of expressing his angst in about as existentialist a form as you can get. "In truth, I'm an anarchist," he says. "I don't have a political solution to change all that's wrong with the world."

The truth is a little more complicated. Whereas many British climbers start their vertical lives with the Scouts or as something unusual to do at university, Robert caught the bug at the age of eight after seeing the film of a Henri Troyat novel, La Neige En Deuil. He tried mountaineering but hated the endurance aspect of it so stuck to rock climbing. After serving a long apprenticeship he became extremely good at it, making a speciality of climbing extremely difficult routes without the protection of a rope. This dangerous exercise was not without incident. Robert says he met his future wife with both his arms in plaster and eight months later was in a coma following a fall.

Such outrageous behaviour earned him respect and quite a lot of concern in the climbing world, but by his early 30s Robert was working part-time in a sports shop to fund his climbing, feeling he wasn't going anywhere and hadn't got the recognition he deserved. He could have tried his luck on the international climbing circuit but his lack of inches counted against him. Besides, he didn't want to be a little famous, he wanted to be famous on a planetary scale. He kicked off his campaign in 1994, climbing the City Corp Center Bank in Chicago, the 59-storey Tour de Montparnasse and the Elf Aquitaine building in Paris, as well as scaring pedestrians in New York.

He was instantly famous, appearing on news programmes all over the world. His Chicago climb was the lead item on Antenne 2's one o'clock bulletin. Given the United States' appetite for the bizarre, it goes without saying that he became an instant celebrity there as well.

Suddenly sponsors were interested in backing him and he looked for new challenges. In July 1995 he made the first external and unassisted ascent of London's Canary Wharf Tower, although he was nabbed with three storeys of the 800ft building left to climb. Picking a building stuffed to the gunnels with journalists was an obvious move for a publicity-seeker and he stopped at Live TV's floor to knock on the window and ask for a glass of water.

When the British Mountaineering Council was asked for a quote on his achievement, its rather sniffy reply — "Just because it's very tall doesn't mean it's very difficult" — illustrated the diffidence Robert's antics were generating among his old climbing companions. While his solo rock climbs were of a fiendish complexity, Robert's buildings were straightforward. One wag suggested that he was risking more being in jail in New York than climbing the Empire State.

Other top French climbers, who regard him as a slightly marginalised figure, began to refer to him as a "clown". "I would say he's crazy," says Dominique Vulliamy of Vertical magazine. "Or weird. Actually, he's more weird than crazy. Maybe it's because he's small. At the very beginning it was a joke but he found the recognition he wouldn't have got otherwise. And he wanted recognition to get money. He's a great climber, though."

None of this criticism has stopped Robert. In the past few months he's climbed buildings and bridges in Hong Kong, San Francisco, Sydney and Rio de Janeiro. He jogged up the Eiffel Tower in 45 minutes. He even tried the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, the world's highest building, before being grabbed by policemen through a window on the 60th floor. Wherever he has gone, the television cameras have followed, turning the diminutive Robert into a global phenomenon.

Celebrity hasn't come without its costs. Robert left his long-suffering wife and three children in their home village while he moved to Paris to enjoy the fringe benefits of his flamboyant climbs. He also says his parents have taken a dim view of his behaviour. "To them I'm a Martian. They don't approve because it's illegal to climb buildings; my mother even cried when I was first in trouble with the law. We're not on the same wavelength."

He says he is motivated purely by his rebellious spirit. "Climbing is my whole life," he says. "Money doesn't interest me. I'd love to have a Lamborghini but only if I didn't have to work too hard to get it."

Supermouse may offer muscle cures

Tim Radford

***MIGHTY MOUSE* lives. A small but beefy super-rodent has just stepped off the cartoonist's drawing board and is throwing his weight about in a US laboratory. Scientists took out just one of the 60,000 or so genes from a laboratory mouse and produced a "Hercules" version, with two or three times the normal muscle mass.**

The research one day could pay off in bigger, leaner farm animals and new treatments for muscular dystrophy and other wasting diseases.

The Sumo-wrestler version of a mouse — reported in the journal Nature — began with the discovery some years ago by Se-Jin Lee and fellow-scientists at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, of a gene called growth differentiation factor 8, or GDF 8 for short, which seemed to be involved in skeletal muscle tissue.

Wanting to see how it worked, they erased it from the rodent's genetic code — the DNA sequence that provides a blueprint for the body's machinery — and started breeding.

"The first thing we noticed was that the knockout mice had unusually large shoulders and hips," said Alexandra McPherron, one of the team at Johns Hopkins. "On closer analysis we found that all their muscles were two to three times normal size. Except for the muscles, the mice appear to be normal and healthy."

Dr Lee said: "GDF 8 could give us new opportunities to treat the many muscle-wasting diseases like muscular dystrophy, or the muscle loss that accompanies some cancers and Aids . . . There is a lot more to be learned about this particular molecule."

But GDF 8 has been found in many vertebrates including cows, chickens and humans. In theory, its removal would mean healthy animals with more muscle and less fat. Since consumers are already demanding lean rather than fat meat, this could have profound implications for agriculture.

But the research also raises an evolutionary puzzle: if more muscle is good, why does the gene exist at all?

"You can get rid of it in mice and the animals are to all intents and purposes normal," said Dr Lee. "One could even make the argument that they are better off without it. But there has to be a catch. One is that there is something really wrong with these animals and we just haven't found it yet." The other is that the gene might be less important only for cosseted laboratory animals.

The animals might — because of the missing gene — be slower or less aggressive in some subtle way. "In the wild, that might be the death of them," he said.

Dr Lee is a founder of a company called MetaMorphix, which will develop the Hopkins work. He and colleagues have identified a dozen growth factors in the same family. They still have to understand what they do and how.



The genetically enhanced mouse, right, has wider shoulders and hips than normal

Letter from Winnipeg David Koulack

Swimming against the tide

THIS is war. Overhead I can hear the constant and distinctive chatter of helicopters searching for survivors behind the enemy lines. On the ground there is the perpetual roar of earth-moving equipment getting into position to turn roadways into a series of secondary dikes. This city of 600,000 people is mobilised for action.

Buses transport cadres of able-bodied volunteers to the front lines. There is no age limit for service here. The only requirement is the strength to pass a 30lb sandbag to the next person and the willingness to do it again and again until arms and backs ache and hands feel as if they are frozen blocks of ice.

For those unable to do the heavy work, there are other jobs to be done. Hotlines have to be staffed, evacuation centres have to be established, food, bedding and clothes have to be collected and the progress of the battle has to be monitored.

We're fighting an old enemy, but an enemy that seems intent on attacking with a ferociousness that none of us have experienced before. The enemy is the Red river. It flows north from the United States through Manitoba where it passes through Lake Winnipeg and on into Hudson's Bay.

The river is in no hurry to wreak its destruction. Just as we are preparing our defences, it is massing its forces for the onslaught. Slowed by ice dams to the north of us and already swollen by a late spring run-off of unusually vast amounts of winter's snow, the Red seems content to bide its time waiting for a propitious moment to launch its assault.

One of the tactics the river employs is to lure the unsuspecting local inhabitants into a false sense of security. There are no torrents, no sudden rushes of current, just the slow inexorable rising of the tide.

It has forced the evacuation of 45,000 people from Grand Forks, North Dakota as well as smaller communities in southern Manitoba. And just to the south of us, the Red river has carved out a 27-mile lake in what was, a short time ago, fertile farm land.

The people in Winnipeg feel a combination of fear and optimism. There is, after all, the consolation of a diversionary floodway built after a devastating flood in the fifties, which was designed specifically to prevent an onslaught just like the one that we are facing. But is it enough?

No one seems to know. The experts have certainly not been able to tell us: their forecasts change from day to day.

It was only a few days ago that we were building a dike in St. Germain-Vermette, a part of Winnipeg to the south that is not protected by the floodway. At the time, it was hard to believe that those flat, dry lands would soon be covered by water.

At the house we worked on, the owners had prudently moved their furniture into storage and found shelter for their dogs, cats and horses. Twenty-six thousand sandbags were put in place to form a 6ft-high dike around the dwelling. Three days later, the house was an island.

Today we increased the height of a dike around a house within the floodway's catchment area. Although this dike was built less than a week ago, ever changing estimates of impending water levels have made it imperative that we raise the dike an additional 8 inches.

When we arrived early in the morning, water was already lapping at the base of the existing dike. A huge pile of sandbags, representing only a tiny fraction of the 4 million or so that have been made by hand and machine awaited us in the driveway.

Fortunately by now we're all old hands at the task. A line was formed and bags were passed from hand to hand. Three people standing astride the dike received the bags and tamped them into place. In only a few hours, and with a feeling of some satisfaction, we managed to complete the job.

There was something exciting about the work — the camaraderie, the pleasure of helping friends and neighbours. And, of course, there was the pleasing knowledge that we had helped to save one more family from the scourge of inundation.

So it was sad to hear on the car radio, as I was returning home, that the family we had helped, as well as others on that section of the Red river's bank, had been ordered to evacuate.

Apparently we have lost that battle. Hopefully we'll still be able to win the war.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***HOW* does a country called by its inhabitants Shqiptari come to be known as Albania?**

THE name Albania is believed to be derived from the Albanoi, an Illyrian tribe which lived in what is today central Albania, from the second century BC. Since the 16th century, however, Albanians themselves have called their language *Shqipe*, their country *Shqiperia* and themselves *Shqiptare*. Albanian scholars believe that these names are derived from the word *shqiptoj*, meaning to speak intelligibly. (Source: Albania, by W Bland, Cleo Press, 1988.) — *Brian Palmer, St Albans, Hertfordshire*

***WHEN* my children asked where they were before mummy's tummy, I could only come up with "Nowhere". Does anyone have a better answer?**

THEY weren't anywhere, they were preconceptions. — *Gordon Jackson, Hyde, Cheshire*

HALF of you was inside mummy, half of you was inside daddy, then we joined those halves together and made the whole you. — *Nicci Salmon, London*

YOU are contemplating the wonder of the creation of your children out of nothing; there was no "before". Whether you choose scientific or religious language to express it, stand in awe of it. — *(Rev) Michael Hampson, Harlow, Essex*

***WHAT* became of Black, Asian and Arabic people in Nazi-occupied Europe during the second world war?**

ALL were rounded up and transported to the United States late in 1941. In response, Congress declared on December 11 that a state of war existed between Germany and the US. Plans to ship all the Pennsylvania Dutch back to Germany were never finalised. — *James G Baird, Woodstock, USA*

THERE WERE very few blacks in Europe. France had a small population of Africans, mostly active in the entertainment field but, before the German invasion, most returned to the French-African territories from which they had come. The Germans had to be careful not to offend Asians with their "Aryan" master race theories as the Japanese were their allies. A small number of Indians were recruited from prisoner of war camps to form an Indian brigade fighting the British. As to Arabs, the Germans courted a faction of Palestinians in the hope of instigating an uprising against the British. The head of Palestinian Muslims, known as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, lived in Berlin during the war and incited Arabs to rise to support the Germans. — *Peter Terry, Bridgehampton, New York, USA*

***WHAT* is the derivation of the titles Miss and Mrs?**

MASTER came from the Latin Magister and mistress is the feminine equivalent. Mistress was abbreviated to Miss or Mrs in the 16th century. In the 18th century it became common to refer to an unmarried woman as Miss, and a married woman as Mrs. — *Peter Sharp, Warkworth, New Zealand*

Any answers?

WHERE* is (or was) the original "ghost town" and did it exist in fiction before it existed in fact? — *Edmund O'Connor, Preston, Lancashire

SUPPOSE* you could fool enough people into queueing around a building in a continuous loop. Would the queue occasionally jump forward as usual or would it do something else? — *Robert Worth, Southampton

IT WOULD* appear that both pure Ecstasy and Prozac exert their effect on the serotonin receptor sites in the brain. Why is the former illegal and the latter widely prescribed legally? — *F Brough, Epworth, Lincolnshire

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Tsang Tso-choi, self-styled King of Kowloon, gives voice to a rebellious street culture PHOTO: JENNI MEILI LAU

Kowloon sees the writing on the wall

Andrew Higgins

IT WAS not the coronation the King of Kowloon had clamoured for, but he still judged the occasion worth a regal effort: he took a bath. He also wore a new pair of green polyester trousers.

"Usually the King is very stinky — I reminded him to have a bath," explained Lau Kin-wai, courtier and master of ceremony's for the formal presentation of one of Hong Kong's smelliest, most subversive and best-known local legends.

The would-be monarch — a title proclaimed from bus-stops, flyovers, telephone poles, the Star Ferry pier and countless patches of concrete — also goes by the name Tsang Tso-choi, an impoverished former caretaker, frequent visitor to police stations and self-taught practitioner of the most effete of China's traditional arts.

In a colony of 6.3 million people where the ruling plutocracy, Chinese and British, has long presented money-making and horse-racing as the only passions, the King carries the irreverent standard of a rebellious street culture both enlivened and frightened by the approach of Chinese rule on July 1.

"I don't follow the rules; there is no point to any rules," growled the King, splashing black ink on a wall with a thick brush. "I only do what I want to do."

Fans call him a calligrapher, foes a graffiti vandal. Whatever he is, no one can miss him. He has spent 40 of his 76 years plastering Hong Kong with Chinese jabberwocky claiming that his ancestors slept with emperors, ruled Kowloon and were robbed by the British.

Like Mao Zedong, a fellow calligrapher, he boasts of great prowess as a swimmer, despite being crippled and hobbling on crutches.

Long dismissed as a half-mad tramp who belongs in a jail or a lunatic asylum rather than the art gallery, a freshly-soaped Mr Tsang ventured from his usual habitat of grimy Kowloon housing estates last month and crossed Victoria Harbour to bless the first vernissage of his wild brushwork at the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

Mr Lau, who organised the show, hails him as the authentic voice of real Hong Kong: a gritty eccentric who mocks and subverts both the smothering orthodoxy of China's traditional literati and the shallow showiness of the colony's well-scrubbed, Westernised élite. "For thousands of years, Chinese calligraphers have been copying the same masters over and over. The King follows only himself," says Mr Lau.

But guardians of Chinese tradition are furious — despite claims that his brush-stroke mimics a technique used two millennia ago during the Han dynasty. "How can anyone pretend this mess is calligraphy?" fumed Lee Yun-woon, a trained calligrapher and scholar.

The King, born across the border in Guangdong province but resident in Hong Kong since the age of 16, went to school for only two years and is not fussy about what people call him. Celebrity has done little to relieve his poverty — although he did get new trousers for the Chinese New Year.

"When someone brings a half crazy street person off the street month and puts him in a gallery many mainland Chinese hit the roof," said PK Leung, a local poet. "For them calligraphy is for learned scholars. They want to see calligraphy in a museum."

But the King makes a prickly mascot for Hong Kong. Admirers are usually told to get lost. So too are the police who, though unsure what to do with such an institution, still try to stop him daubing public property with artistic profanities.

Homecoming for one of the lads

Tom Courtenay is back with a hit play, a movie and even a bit of self-belief. He talks to **Simon Hattenstone**

TOM COURTENAY opens his front door and asks me whether I'm the work experience girl. "No, of course you're not," he says, dragging me down to the kitchen for a coffee. "But this is bollocks isn't it?" I wait for an explanation, while he comes over all mumsy. "So that's half a sugar and milk. It is bollocks, isn't it? Total, utter bollocks. You said milk?"

It turns out we've sent a work experience person along to his house with our photographer without telling him. Courtenay doesn't like having his picture taken at the best of times. "I mean, what is she going to learn? It's better I express myself, get it out of the system, don't you think? This really is total bollocks. You know, Albert always said to me, 'Don't ever let them in your house,' and I thought sod it, but perhaps he was right . . . Well, I hope she's young and pretty at least."

A few minutes later the bell rings. It's the young and pretty work experience girl and Courtenay gets busy again with his whistling coffee pot. He then grimaces his way through a few rolls of film while telling me how much he likes his new film, The Boy From Mercury. He had to learn a Dublin accent for this Billy-Liar-revisited tale of a young boy who lives in a fantasy world.

He says the film, which stars another kitchen-sink throwback, Rita Tushingham, is a lovely, simple story, and it is. What seems to have pleased him most, though, is mastering the accent.

"But we are half Irish, of course . . ." And he's off. "Yes, Courtenay is an Irish name. My father and my uncle, who died last week, both went to Cork to have a look where at they came from. That's the only time they went abroad. Meeer-cueer-aaee," he says trying out his new Dublin accent, and giggles. "Hahahahal lovely." It's the campest laugh in the world. He says he's never been interested in any of that stuff. Actually, he was a bit of a lad in the heady days. There were so many girls offering themselves, and it seemed churlish to refuse. Natalie Wood was the biggest name, but it has been suggested that he even outscored Albert Finney.

Was he a tart? "Oh no . . . well, not like I could have been."

The lads. Courtenay, Finney and Alan Bates. They were always grouped. Northern boys who struck lucky when it was fashionable to have an accent, attitude and a smidgen of sweat. Collectively, they seemed brazen and testosterone-charged. But as an actor Courtenay was different. Somehow the others trumpeted their naturalism, while he was quieter, less stagey, brilliant at conveying longing.

It became the thing to treat Finney and Courtenay as alter-egos: the former extrovert, the latter a dolorous loner. Even Finney called him a typical Yorkshire miseryguts. "The expression of those sorts of things, emotion, were always in me. Had I been more middle-class, more English, it might have been kept down."

Courtenay plays little more than a cameo in The Boy From Mercury as a loopy, lovable uncle. The best moment comes when he eyeballs his pint, as if taking a last look at his best friend before the coffin is nailed down, and chants "Goodluckl Goodluckl Goodluck!" Pure onomatopoeia as he gurgles the stuff down and wipes away his Guinness 'tache. It's a tiny scene, but typical Courtenay — lugubrious, poignant and very funny.

Looking through the cuttings I discovered a news story from 1961, headlined "Painter's son gets acting break". I tell him how grand it sounds, as if he could have been fathered by Picasso, and he giggles. "Yes, I've been thinking a bit about those days because of my uncle's death last week . . . They were both painters on trawlers in Hull. We were fish stock."



Long-distance runner . . . Courtenay, at 60, has at last found a kind of stability PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

He remembers his old friend, the playwright Alan Plater, who seemed from a different world. "I think his father worked in some capacity on the railways. He lived near the grammar school, and when I went to his house and saw what they had. Very posh. They weren't fish stock."

Didn't his family think, well, it was a bit poncy to go on the stage? "Poncy?" says Courtenay. "It wasn't poncy. It was unimaginable."

UNLIKE Plater, Courtenay did not miss the party that was the sixties, but it mucked around with his values. He felt uneasy with success, as if he'd not earned it. "It wasn't quite right. If I was going to do this acting, this wasn't the best way to go round it . . . to become very famous when you've done bugger all wasn't the right way."

I ask him which films he is proud of, and he umms and ahs and says, none particularly. Eventually, he nominates the little seen Ivan Denisovitch. "I loved it actually, and that's what put me off being in films because they all want blockbusters."

So he stepped off the celebrity runway and crawled back to the regional stage. It was in seventies Manchester that I got to know Tom Courtenay's work. He was a regular at the Royal Exchange, radically in the round. While London's West End became an anachronism, at the Exchange you could sit at ground level fielding volleys of actorly spit from the cast inches away. Even among the likes of Hoskins, Finney, Mirren, McTeer and Robert Lindsay, Courtenay shone with his delicacy and capacity for strangulated despair. And then there was his remarkable wail — the vowel stretched to breaking point, the pitch rising hopelessly as if he were squeezing the life out of his soul.

Molière, Ayckbourn, Hamlet, Andy Capp, The Dresser, the work was superb. He had told the headline writers to sod off — but it still hurt when, despite an Oscar nomination for The Dresser, they took him at his word. "I chose to change, and I remember reading a film guide and it was as though I were dead. And I thought, 'Bollocks to you, it is not true.'"

A few years ago, just before his celebrated performance in Moscow Stations, he gave a series of interviews in which he seemed unconsolably miserable. He told the world he was a pessimist at the best of times, but now he was worried where the next offer was coming from. At the same time, he discussed the trauma of his and his wife Isabel Crossley's still-born baby and the painful absence at the centre of their lives. Did this help explain his loss of self-belief? "Oh no, no, no, I'm not allowed . . . Isabel hates me talking about that. When I did Moscow Stations these ladies interviewed me and they were so sweet and it just slipped out."

Courtenay says that today he feels stronger, more at ease with himself. He has Isabel, his numerous hobbies (astronomy, ornithology, gardening), he is starting to write, he has just completed a successful West End run with Albert in the play Art, and the film.

"Life is more stable now. It did take me many years to get over the meteoric rise to fame and the subsequent pulling back . . . There was a time when I wasn't sure I had anything left to offer. I can't pretend I'm the most in-demand actor in the world — it would be a lie to say that I was. But I think the main thing is to sort out some kind of belief in yourself — not an overwhelming belief, but let's say an absence of disbelief."

Mob's your uncle for the rank and file

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

MIKE NEWELL can't be too surprised at the low profile he has, despite being a leading British director. Notwithstanding the many successes, he's much too eclectic to be fashionable. Try finding the connection between Dance With A Stranger and Four Weddings And A Funeral, let alone Enchanted April and **Donnie Brasco**, his first big-budget American film.

But when he hits the target, he's one of the best film-makers around. Here, he has undoubtedly given the Mafia thriller a new twist, in a way that forces us to freshen our reactions. The film is based by Paul Attanasio on the memoirs of an undercover FBI agent ordered to infiltrate the lower orders of the mob.

Donnie Brasco (Johnny Depp) is particularly keen to associate himself with one Leftie Ruggiero (Al Pacino), a small-time hood who knows the game but will always be a foot-soldier rather than an officer. Taken under the wing of a proud but complaining veteran, Donnie is sucked into this world too deep for comfort. He begins to like Leftie, who has introduced him to his family and made him, in short, virtually a surrogate son.

On one level this is as personal a story as any Mafia movie. Yet, on another level, Newell's focus is broader. He's interested in the Mob's rank and file, the ones usually pushed to the edge of the frame. And, in portraying them, he finds them to be surprisingly, almost pathetically stupid, shabby, bored and uptight: "Twenty-six guys I clipped, and do I get upped?" asks Leftie at one point.

Like Leftie, they are all capable of crimes no ordinary human would contemplate, and like him they are also capable of immense loyalty and generosity. Of course, the idea that the worst of crooks are often the best of friends is hardly a new one. In this film, however, the line between good and evil is further blurred. Pacino and Depp, the biter and the bit, are not dissimilar.

Much of the film's success is due to Newell's handling of Pacino, and to that actor's extraordinary sense of nuance. For once, Pacino whispers rather than shouts, as if he knew that a more carefree, and careless, performance would unbalance the movie. Depp's playing, meanwhile, is largely understated and internalised.

Donnie Brasco is not without its drawbacks. The film is slow and long. On occasions it becomes becalmed, as it concentrates on atmosphere and detail rather than explosive plot developments. But, if this is a movie that requires some patience, the dividends it yields are considerable. Donnie Brasco is light-years away from your average bit of Hollywood product.

Considering Susan Streitfeld's **Female Perversions** was part-produced by the dreaded Zalman King (9½ Weeks), it is surprising what risks it takes in putting Louise Kaplan's feminist study on the screen. This is the kind of movie that they used to make before film-makers began to distrust the capacities of their audiences.

Tilda Swinton plays an accomplished attorney, about to be made a judge by her state governor. But despite her achievements, she feels like a fraud. She's possessed by masochistic fantasies and embarks on a lesbian affair with a psychiatrist after her man lets her down. Her sister (Amy Madigan) is a compulsive shoplifter. Like almost all the women in the film, they seem unable to fit into the slots men have created for them.

Freud is the key to this extraordinary work, illuminated by a performance of luminous skill from Swinton and by elegant and imaginative direction from Streitfeld.

Sometimes its iron-clad certainties are hard to take, but Female Perversions, if uneven, makes the usual Hollywood female-bonding movies look sloppy and compromised. I only wish it could have addressed a bigger public with a more direct, less abstract storyline.

Mort Ransen's **Margaret's Museum** has Helena Bonham Carter as a rebellious young woman living on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, in the decidedly unliberated forties. In this severe mining community, she is horrified of marrying anyone forced underground before his allotted span. Her father and elder brother have already paid the price. Smitten by the charms of Clive Russell's dishwashing bagpiper, she is distraught when he loses his job and is forced down the pit. Disaster — and Gothic madness — beckons.

The film received good reviews in Canada, where Bonham Carter's doughty performance was rightly praised, but it remains little more than an intriguing curate's egg.

Undoubtedly, the most charming film of the week is Martin Duffy's **The Boy from Mercury**, which has Rita Tushingham and Tom Courtenay presiding over a bevy of young actors, as if acting with kids were a pleasure rather than a chore. This first feature, about a boy who believes he's from another planet and signals to his alien friends from his bedroom window, is often beautifully observed and has a real as opposed to fake take on childhood fantasies. A small gem.

Theatre of life on canvas

Rachel Barnes on the legacy of 18th century art's great chronicler, Hogarth

MY PICTURE was my stage and men and women my actors, wrote William Hogarth, the most theatrical of painters. His paintings were his stage sets and his sitters "merely players", dressed in costume. And he played many roles: satirist, propagandist, artist, politician, philanthropist, always sure of his audience.

Hogarth dominated English art during the first years of the 18th century. Few artists have their name in the English language: the word Hogarthian still suggests a satirical and ironic view of humanity. His mission was to expose the weaknesses and satirise the follies of the human race.

Hogarth spoke rarely of the traumas of his childhood. Part of it was spent in the notorious Fleet Prison with his family, after his father's imprisonment for debt. The experience, which broke his father, left him permanently with a bleak view of humanity. Like Charles Dickens, forced to work in the blacking factory, the scars went deep. But both artist and writer drew on the poverty and confinement they had witnessed, which became raw material for their work.

Perhaps he learned from his father's misfortunes. Hogarth seemed almost to make a virtue of his disadvantages and his inauspicious beginnings. Plain, extremely short, with no material advantages, he was determined to take the world by storm.

Rebellious and acerbic, with a high estimation of his own worth, Hogarth was the artist most responsible for creating an art rooted in English life and English culture. His Modern Moral Subjects, narrative dramas from everyday life — The Rake's Progress, The Harlot's Progress and Marriage A La Mode — made him rich and famous.

Hogarth's moralities were soap operas, beginning a tradition Victorian narrative painters would later exploit. They were widely circulated in printed form and were enormously popular. The stories came from the corrupt society Hogarth observed all around him and his characters were often known figures, the scandals contemporary ones. The uneasy juxtaposition of extreme wealth and poverty was a constant theme.

Hogarth wrote: "I compose pictures on canvas, similar to representations of stage." He did everything he could to bring out what he called the "character" of each figure, through the face, dress and behaviour. Hogarth was intensely patriotic, almost jingoistic. He was working at a time when British art was dominated by foreign artists.

Hogarth was irritated by the connoisseurs who assembled great collections of old masters, but seldom commissioned from living artists. He knew they did not take him seriously as a painter and waged war on them and their élitism. In later years he became bitter, as newly fashionable artists such as Joshua Reynolds rose to prominence.

Although both in his day and now he was recognised for his engravings, Hogarth was an extraordinary painter, with an advanced awareness of the textural and sensual qualities of paint and a rare combination of delicacy and freedom when using it.

The Tate Gallery in London is celebrating Hogarth the painter until June 8, in the first of a major programme of events and exhibitions to commemorate the tercentenary of his birth. The Tate had to ask the National Gallery to hand over The Graham Children, an ambitious life-size group portrait, one of his masterpieces. It was perhaps to flatter his patron, Daniel Graham, prosperous apothecary to the Royal Household and Chelsea Hospital, that Hogarth based the portrait on Van Dyck's portrait of Charles I's children. Yet it is more bourgeois, owing a good deal to Dutch 17th century family portraits. The informality of the children is in striking contrast to the stiffness of other British portraits of the period. In it, the curtain goes up, not on a drama, but on delightful stage business. The characters act out a scene from childhood and Hogarth stage manages one of the most memorable images in art of the gaiety and innocence of childhood.

But it is no exception to the expression of Hogarth's darker nature. The baby Thomas gazes rapturously at a goldfinch in its gilded cage. Thomas's portrait is posthumous. Hogarth only had time to sketch the baby before the child's sudden death.

Hogarth avoids the fashionable formulas for portraiture and with his genius for observation and unexpected compassion, he describes the children as individuals. Henrietta, the eldest girl, is more self-conscious than her siblings; she is in charge of them and permits herself only a tentative smile. Her brother, Richard, aged eight, is fascinated by his musical toy, which has a scene of Orpheus charming the animals engraved on it. His sister, Anna Maria, seven, picks up her skirts and dances with the uninhibited high spirits of childhood.

But the children's carefree days are only an illusion. There is a clock ticking away and on it, Cupid, representing love or sex, carries the scythe and an hour glass, symbols of time and death. Death will triumph over love. But the most sinister symbol is the cat, one of the most animated cats in art, in danger of upstaging the children. Its whole soul is in its eyes as it gazes transfixed by the terrified bird. The moment the bird flies from its cage, the cat will pounce, a metaphor for the terrors of the outside world.

Hogarth's message is clear. The life of the senses is mortal and the objects reinforce the five senses; the fruits represent taste, the organ hearing, the carnation smell, the painting sight, and the toy touch.

Hogarth was a complex man and cynicism was only a part of him. He loved children, although he and his wife Jane Thornhill remained childless, to their great sadness. The tender side of his nature was expressed in his philanthropic involvement with hospitals, in particular his long association with the Thomas Coram Foundation for foundlings.

But Hogarth's work is without sentimentality — there is always the cutting edge, the potential for comedy. He always took a pace back to watch the drama unfold.

The Graham Children . . . Hogarth describes the characters with a genius for observation and symbolic detail

Cash on delivery

COUNTRY MUSIC
Adam Sweeting

IN THE early nineties, the Johnny Cash story seemed to be all over. He couldn't find a record company he felt happy with, his health was fragile, and his old time God-fearin' values seemed as quaint as Arkwright's spinning jenny.

Now, thanks in large measure to Rick Rubin and his American Recordings label, Cash is enjoying a fresh lease of life. The two albums he has made for Rubin have fast-forwarded the legend of the Man in Black into renewed relevance, while throwing into relief the scale of his career. Judging by the crowd at the Royal Albert Hall last month, he's pulling in new listeners of all ages.

Watching Cash crack through a brisk reappraisal of his countless musical highlights, it seems extraordinary that they were ever in any danger of being overlooked, but Cash's philosophy has been to ignore fashion and keep on keeping on.

"It's good to be back in London and feeling good," he rumbled, after making his time-honoured announcement, "Hello, I'm Johnny Cash." From the moment he loomed onstage, striding towards the audience with the gait of a man who has had a few whiskies and is trying to walk a straight line for the benefit of the Highway Patrol, he radiated a sense of a performer secure in his own mythology and having a great time reminding us of it.

He cut straight to the point, leading his battle-hardened quintet into a gritty Folsom Prison Blues, then jumping into an eerie Ghost Riders In The Sky ("yippy-aye-ayyy"s and all) and capping that with a robust Get Rhythm.

A Cash show is always an excuse for some country-music history and a flick through the family album. At the back of the stage is silver-haired drummer W S Holland, whom Cash enticed away from Carl Perkins's band nearly 40 years ago. John Carter Cash, son of Johnny and June, plays rhythm guitar stage right, and gets a solo spot of his own while dad slips off for a breather. The surprise guest was Johnny's ex-son-in-law Nick Lowe, who popped up for a not entirely blemish-free Without Love.

There's the inevitable June Carter portion too, where we get some connubial nuzzling, duets on Jackson and If I Were A Carpenter, and a trot through some back-porch Carter Family history. But you sit through it all to hear the big man sing I Walk The Line (no drums, just slap-bass and scrubbed acoustic guitar), his chokingly emotive version of Long Black Veil, or a stirring performance of Tom Petty's Southern Accents that reframes the song as a proud, mystical hymn for the old South. Cash manages to function as both larger-than-life icon and flesh-and-blood musician without compromising either.

Election night? More like a bullfight

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

"*A LANDSLIDE?*" said Professor Tony King witheringly on **Election 97** (BBC1). "It is an asteroid hitting the planet and destroying practically all life on Earth."

This was terrible news for Peter Snow. He had a nice new landslide computer graphic all ready. He hadn't anticipated an asteroid. Well, you don't, do you?

In Snow's landslide 12 politicians, hurtfully called the Dicey Dozen, stood under a cliff. "Look at that!" cried Snow and they were all buried alive. Except Mr Howard, who made no visible effort to dig his colleagues out. As an encore Snow, who in another age would have filled the stage with flags, also buried several prime ministers and Mr Portillo.

Early in the evening Jeremy Paxman had asked Mr Portillo: "Are you ready to drink hemlock yet?" Much later, soundly thrashed by a Twigg, Portillo no longer had to be patient. "Oh, Jeremy, do stop this nonsensel I'm now a man outside the Commons. I don't have to bother with questions like that."

Being hit with a cliff is a great test of character. Portillo went with as much dignity as a man can who has admitted before a late night crowd ("Oo!") that he was christened Denzil Xavier.

David Mellor was hauled off yelling "Get off back to Mexicol" at Sir James Goldsmith. Mellor said it was not so much a landslide as a sea wall collapsing all round you. This was a blow to Snow, who hadn't got a sea wall either.

Snow did have a computer game in which Tony "Top Gun" Blair went round shooting up blue tower blocks. "Angela Rumbold's seat is quite an easy one to hit!" Dame Angela, rather a spare sort of woman, has every cause for complaint.

It was a night like a bullfight. As the carcasses were hauled away, the new intake looked young and fresh and milky as veal calves.

Unlike the TV presenters, touched up by Sharon in make-up, veteran politicians at the count had faces as white as fish bellies. Dame Angela gave a sharp grimace. Michael Portillo chewed his cheek.

Martin Bell's face seemed clenched in pain, which was unusual as he was winning. He said: "I expected 48 hours in politics and I've got five years." That's the tariff for the crime. Five years.

Outside the Festival Hall the singing crowd were waving their arms like sea anemones. Tony Blair, who had just flown in, said: "It's been a long journey, has it not?" He tends to say "Has it not?" and "Is it not?", coaxing agreement. David Dimbleby called it a tight-laced speech.

At Downing Street John Major was undoing his corsets and making the comfiest speech of his life ("So right. OK. We lost") to a few staff. It was punctuated with gusts of laughter as the telephone rang. No one answered it.

Britain won the **Eurovision Song Contest** (BBC1) with a song originally written to cheer up the Samaritans. Ireland, which has won four times in five years, was runner-up and relieved.

Norway scored nil points for the fourth time — a world record. It was, said Terry Wogan, the kind of song during which you began to notice the set. As Harry Cohn, the Hollywood mogul, once told his set designer: "If they start noticing the fireplace, we're fucked."

However, in the spirit of our song, We're All Gonna Shine A Light Together, let's give everyone a prize. Here are the results of the Nancy jury:

Best pigtail on a baldie: Italy. Most boring costume colour: black.

Most gifted musician: the man playing a bunch of grapes for Greece. Best, indeed only, glimpse of knickerbockers on a conductor: Sweden.

Jolliest fat lady by a long chalk: Russia. The Poirot award for the most Gallic moustache: France.

The George Robey Chuckle Cup for a comic song: Denmark. The singer — who, judging by his trousers, was a bit of a wag — was in love with directory inquiries.

The Golden Backscratcher for favours given and received. Winners: Greece and Cyprus, who awarded each other 12 points. Runners-up: Russia and Slovenia.

The Bunch of Bastards Award for only giving Britain one point: Malta.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Countryside up in flames

Paul Evans

"APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ Memory and desire, stirring/ Dull roots with spring rain."

So wrote T S Eliot in The Waste Land. Lilacs are certainly blooming along the railway lines. And the purple flowers of Honesty, the vivid blues of borage and bluebells and the foamy white heads of cow parsley are stirring in little neglected corners of lanes and hedgerows. Although memory and desire seem strongly mixed — with the sweet balsam scent of young poplar leaves, the frantic courtships and nest building of birds and the flickering wings of early butterflies — much of the land has experienced an exceptional cruelty this April.

This has been the driest spring for more than 200 years. Farmers are worried about their crops. Reservoirs are showing signs of serious depletion. Rivers are low and the Thames now has mud banks that have not been exposed for centuries. An even more worrying effect of the drought has been the many treasured landscapes which have literally gone up in smoke.

Weeks without rain, tinder-dry leaf litter and strong breezes have put may areas of moorland, woodland and heath at risk from fire. The south and southwest of England have been badly hit. On Dartmoor, two square miles of moorland and part of Yarner Wood's ancient woodland were devastated, as were several miles of heathland at Postbridge.

Firefighters have just controlled a fire covering 1,730 acres between St Ives and St Just in western Cornwall, in a designated area of outstanding natural beauty containing many archaeological sites and important wildlife habitats. Battles have raged to save Brighstone Forest on the Isle of Wight, 117 acres of the New Forest and many acres of Surrey heathland from the flames.

Some of these fires have been caused when gorse burning to provide grazing has leapt out of control. There is a school of thought which claims that heaths were dependent on traditional burning methods. The historical and ecological evidence may not support that. Most heaths were either grazed heavily or used for other purposes and burning them was similar to burning a crop. Also many heathland plants and animals could not have survived until today if they had been regularly burned. Fire is a danger to heathland.

Burning on moorland is much more common. Until 1800 burning moorland was only occasional, but with the rise of sheep and grouse, fire management to control the growth of heather in order to produce fresh young shoots became a skilled art. If fires are not properly managed to produce a rapid light burn, or there is a build up of debris or overgrazing, they can become deepseated in the peat and may continue to burn down to the substrate. This not only makes them difficult to control and extinguish, but the changes in the soil structure will affect ecological conditions for decades or even centuries. For many rare species confined to moors and heaths, such fires mean Armageddon.

Unfortunately, many of the recent fires have been caused by a carelessly dropped match or cigarette. Some are the result of arson. It's hard to imagine why someone would want to cause such destruction to some of the finest remaining wild places in Britain. Perhaps that urge to make a mark on the world using fire — man's oldest tool yet greatest fear — is just too powerful for some to resist. Perhaps it is because if a place is wild and beautiful, there will always be those for whom nature stirs a cruel memory and 'desire to turn it into the wasteland.

Chess Leonard Barden

TOO bad for chess that Vlad Kramnik isn't an American. The latest super-tournament at Seville confirmed the Las Palmas and Linares results that established the 21-year-old Muscovite as the world's number two after Kasparov.

But after more than a decade of K v K championships, interspersed with the abortive title challenges of Short and Anand, the game really does need a serious non-Russian contender.

Seville was one of the strongest tournaments to date, lacking only Ivanchuk and Kamsky (temporarily retired) and Kasparov from the world top ten.

Kramnik's win from Karpov, given here last week, was the real decider (Anand and Kramnik 6/9, Karpov, Salov and Topalov 5, Gelfand, Shirov and Polgar 4½, Short 3, Illescas 1½). But it was also significant that Judit Polgar, who came fifth at Seville, again held her own with the very best male grandmasters.

Polgar can now handle all of them except for her poor results against Kasparov, Kramnik and Anand. She is still only 20 and could yet become a credible Kasparov challenger in the next few years.

Illescas v Polgar

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4 Fischer's old favourite of 30 years ago, which Polgar counters by the same strategy as Spassky in 1972. Black allows the white e4 pawn to gain space, but infiltrates pieces on both flanks.

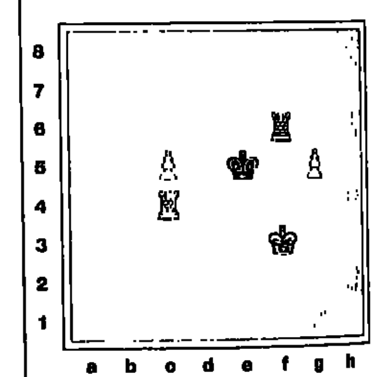
e6 7 0-0 Be7 8 Bb3 0-0 9 f4 Nc6 10 Be3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 Nd7 14 Ne4 Bb7 15 Nd6 Bxd6 16 exd6 Qg5! 17 Qe2 Kh8 18 Rad1 Qg6 19 c4 bxc4 20 Bxc4 f5 Mission accomplished; paradoxically the f file, which in Fischer's early Bc4 Sicilians was the route for White to break through at f7, here becomes route one for Black's counterplay.

21 Be3. Not 21 Bxe6? Rae8, f4 22 Bd3 f3 23 Qf2 Qh5 24 Qg3 e5 25 gxf3 Bxf3 26 Rde1 Rae8 27 Re3 Be6 28 Rfe1? Missing Polgar's queen regroup which grips the white army in a fatal pin. 28 Rxf8+ Rxf8 29 Bxe5 Nxe5 30 Rxe5 (not 30 Qxe5? Qd1+) holds on.

Qf7! 29 Bxe5 Nxe5 30 Rxe5 Qa7+! 31 R5e3 If 31 Qe3 Rxe5! 32 Qxa7 Rxe1+ mates. **Rf3 32 Qh4 h6 33 Resigns.** White loses a rook.

The negative result at Seville was, of course, Nigel Short's. The March PCA ratings (which include Short's failure at Wijk aan Zee and Michael Adams's success at Linares) rank Adams as world No 8, Short No10, and the gap widened further at Seville just as the BCF selectors retained Short as England top board ahead of Adams for the European team championships in Croatia.

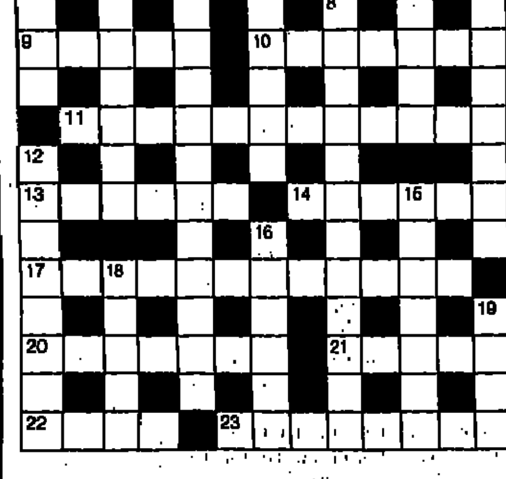
No 2471



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by K Junker). Harder than it appears, and, like last week, a test of your skill with rooks.

No 2470: 1 Rc7+ Kd8(Kb8 2 Rb1 mate) 2 Kc6+ Ke8 3 Kb7 Rd8 4 Rxd8+ Kxd8 5 Rc8+ wins.

Quick crossword no. 365



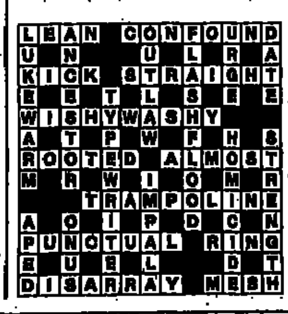
Across

1 Differ (8)
5 Threesome (4)
9 Freight (5)
10 Wreath (7)
11 Map maker (12)
13 Continue — a summary (6)
14 Stress — it's a way of speaking (6)
17 Hostile (12)
20 Non-specialist — officer (7)
21 Perfect (5)
22 Always (4)
23 Alarm (8)

Down

1 Pack — part of a record player (4)
2 Exceed (7)
3 Euphemism for prostitute (4-4, 4)
4 Promise — to give a job to — and go into battle (6)
6 Stretch — of river? (5)
7 Unyielding (8)
8 Transmission (12)
12 Three-sided figure (8)
15 Obvious (7)
16 Fisherman (6)
18 Taut (5)
19 Plot (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

I DON'T know how many books have been written about bridge, but at a conservative guess I would say thousands. By now, you would think, just about every aspect of the game had been covered as thoroughly as possible in one book or another.

So it was refreshing to receive a copy of the latest book in the excellent Step By Step series, published by Batsford, and to find it devoted to a subject that, as far as I know, has not been explored in print before.

The book is by Barry Rigal, and is called Deception In Defence. As well as providing a comprehensive view of the standard positions in which the defenders must play a false card to have any hope of deflecting declarer from the winning line, the book goes deeply into a number of positions where imaginative defenders can conjure up chances from nowhere to break unbeatable contracts.

North
♠Q
♥AQJ64
♦K8732
♣K4

South
♠J742
♥832
♦A9
♣9832

Look at this deal from declarer's point of view, and see if you can make your part-score contract (see table).

South	West	North	East
			Pass
Pass	1♠	2♠(1)	Pass
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Showing 5-5 in hearts and a minor suit

West leads the king of spades, and switches to the jack of clubs. You try the king from dummy, but East wins with the ace, cashes the queen of clubs, and leads the ten of spades, which you ruff in dummy. You play a diamond to the ace and take a finesse of the queen of hearts, which holds. You cash dummy's king of diamonds, to which all follow, and then ruff a diamond with your three of hearts. West overruffs with the king and plays the king of spades, which you ruff in dummy as East follows suit.

You are down to the 87 of diamonds and the A6 of trumps in dummy opposite the jack of spades, eight of hearts and two clubs in your hand. You can afford one more loser. How will you continue?

Since East appears to have two trumps left, you can't afford to cash the ace of hearts, since you would lose the last three tricks. But East also has a diamond and a club in his hand, so you can ruff a diamond with the eight of hearts and a club with the six of hearts, then cash the ace of trumps and concede the last trick. You lead a diamond from dummy, East follows, you ruff with the eight and . . . West, who began life with:

♠AK985 ♥K105 ♦Q6 ♣J107

will overruff with the ten of hearts, and play a spade, promoting the nine of hearts in East's hand for one down!

Of course, if West had not deceptively overruffed the third round of diamonds with the king, you would have cashed the ace of hearts in the four-card ending, drawing all the enemy trumps and allowing you to establish a long diamond.

An excellent principle when trying to fool declarer is: "Play the card declarer knows you to hold." This is a fine example of that rule.

Amorous operator

Cressida Connolly

Cyril Connolly
by Jeremy Lewis
Jonathan Cape 672pp £25

"LOBSTERS he loved, and next to lobsters, sex," the novelist Rose Macauley wrote of my father, Cyril Connolly. As epitaphs go, Macauley's has the advantages of truth, wit and, of course, brevity. Jeremy Lewis's biography is written in the same spirit of insight and wry indulgence. Lewis has captured his subject so vividly that reading the book is like spending time with Cyril himself, and so — for me, at least — this long book is not a sentence too long. Cyril was many things — funny, erudite, often fractious — but he was certainly never boring. Nor is Jeremy Lewis.

"Life without love for me has always seemed like an operation without an anaesthetic," he wrote. From his schooldays, my father had a compulsion to form romantic triangles. It is a measure of how loveable he was that his partners put up with him, although with varying degrees of exasperation. My mother used to get cross when he came back ravenously hungry from his assignations and begged her to make soup for him. "If you've got to have a mistress, you could at least get one who can cook," she used to tease.

Whom Cyril knew would almost make a book in itself. The index is a name-dropper's heaven. He shook Captain Scott's hand as a tiny boy; went to prep school with Orwell and Cecil Beaton; visited Sir Arthur Evans in Crete in 1924, where he was shown the newly excavated frescoes at Knossos. He went to lunch with Edith Wharton (and was bitterly disappointed that she liked his fellow guest, Aldous Huxley, better). He knew Hemingway and Truman Capote and Ezra Pound and James Joyce. Best boast of all, I seem to remember, was that he met Scott Fitzgerald, although Lewis makes no mention of it. Certainly, he appeared with John Betjeman in a television programme devoted to Fitzgerald. Anthony Powell and Ian Fleming and Stephen Spender gossiped about Cyril. Virginia Woolf — not a fan — christened him "Smartyboots": thereafter, Nancy Mitford and Evelyn Waugh always referred to him as "Boots".

Jeremy Lewis enjoys all this, but not at the expense of the people who really mattered in Cyril's life; his sad and rather mysterious father; his lovers and wives; and his oldest and dearest friends, especially Noel Blakiston, Elizabeth Bowen, Maurice Bowra and Joan Leigh Fermor. Friendship was very important to him.

It is testament to Lewis's fine sleuthing that there are several things in this book that I did not know before.

But for all the anecdote, the literary or amorous tittle-tattle, the locus of any writer's biography must be his writing. Lewis accords Cyril's work its rightful place, at the centre of his life. After all, Cyril left a respectable 12 books, two of them outstanding. W H Auden favoured Enemies Of Promise ("you really write about writing in the only way which is interesting to anyone except academics, as a real occupation like banking or fucking, with all its attendant boredom, excitement and terror . . ."), but my money's on The Unquiet Grave as his masterpiece. "I think it is one of the very best books I have read, I am almost sure it will be a classic . . ." Hemingway wrote to him. I hope so.

Cressida Connolly with her father Cyril. He was 'funny, erudite, often fractious, but he was certainly never boring'

If you would like to order a copy of Cyril Connolly at the special discount price of £19 contact Books @ The Guardian Weekly

Behind love's battle lines

Deborah Bosley

Gaglow
by Esther Freud
Hamish Hamilton 243pp £16.99

IT IS not always easy to find the novel that will draw one willingly into its narrative and engage us consistently to the final page. Rarer still is the book in which we taste every morsel of food, feel each chill wind and the reproach of a sideways look. To write in such a fashion is an unusual accomplishment, but one that Esther Freud has achieved resoundingly with her third novel, Gaglow.

The novel begins at the start of the second world war in Berlin with a wealthy Jewish family of grain-dealers, the Belgards. They have one son, the beloved Emanuel, and three daughters, Bina, Martha and the main protagonist, Eva. The girls are raised by their preferred guardian, Fraulein Shulze, under whose strict and loving supervision they slowly grow into distinct characters. Their flawed but admirable mother, Marianna, is shunned by her daughters in favour of Fraulein Shulze; the poignancy of her rejection adds a bittersweet thread to the tale.

When the Belgards are not in Berlin, they are at their country home, Gaglow. It is largely from within its doors that we experience life through the eyes of the youngest daughter, Eva. Emanuel leaves Gaglow to fight in the war, an event that signifies the turning point in the fortunes of the family. As the Belgards wither with the progress of the war, a parallel tale unfolds.

In present-day London, Sarah is the daughter of a German Jewish painter, whom we guess, from the author's parentage, to be a roughly drawn portrait of Lucian Freud. As Sarah poses for him with her new baby, she learns of an old family property, Gaglow, that has resurfaced in Germany. Sarah's fascination for Gaglow and her family's past unfolds as her new life with her child begins.

We have seen already from Freud's previous novels that she is hot on the subtleties of family love; the battle lines drawn and the love given injudiciously. Eva, the youngest sister and, later, the grandmother of Sarah, is, along with the rest of her family, devoted to Emanuel, with whom she shares a birthday.

Before he left to go to war, Emanuel would indulge in elaborate fantasies of running off with Eva when they grew up. Here, Freud cleverly refuses to succumb to a lurid fascination for all things off-colour and, completely sidestepping the issue of incest, she manages to evoke perfectly the piquancy of innocent childhood love.

But Emanuel nurses a secret passion for the lumpen Fraulein Schulze, whom he marries at the end of the war. The conflict destroys the Belgards and wrenches them apart, but Marianna, the beleaguered mother, emerges as a character of great depth and strength.

Gaglow's characters have a nobility that lifts us beyond the depressing messages of much modern fiction. Freud's story has sadness, tragedy and foolishness, but there is redemption and love too. Her writing has a wonderfully restrained sensuality that knows when enough is enough. It is much to her credit that she gives us just what we need to know and no more. In the interests of balance, I looked for fault with this book but could find none. A perfectly paced piece of high-calibre storytelling. Gaglow is a very fine novel.

Of the cabbage as king

Tim Radford

Reaching for the Sun:
How Plants Work
by John King
Cambridge 232pp £9.95

PLANTS may be rooted to the spot, but that does not stop them going places. A stem of rye can make 5km of root a day, and that doesn't include the hairs growing on the root. The root length of one rye plant has been measured at 622km, and the hairs on these roots can stretch to 10,620km.

Lilies of the field may neither reap nor spin, but they have to work like mad to lift water up through their own dense tissues. The difficulty is measured in atmospheres — a car tyre is two atmospheres, a diver has trouble breathing at three atmospheres, but a plant's water-pumping system copes with 30 atmospheres. And even a slow-growing tree has to do it at speed. Hardwoods lift water at the rate of 50 metres an hour.

Industry requires nourishment: plants provide the human race with 80 per cent of its daily energy and two-thirds of all its proteins. But plants are not just industrious, they are reliable. Never mind the clockwork orange: there is a Malayan evergreen called *Wormia suffructicosa* which at full maturity flowers every day for 50 years or more. The buds open at 3am and the petals fall at 4pm the same day; the fruits ripen in precisely five weeks and split to release seed at 3am on the 36th day.

And under any hectare of cultivated land, there are up to a billion weed seeds waiting for that chance exposure to the light that makes them germinate. And how much full sunlight does it take to kickstart the moisture-laden seed of an Arlington Fancy lettuce? Just four seconds.

But then sunlight is powerful stuff. During a sunny summer day, each 1.5 square miles of this planet gets a Hiroshima-sized bombload of energy. Most of it gets reflected back into space immediately. Plants photosynthesise less than 1 per cent of the remainder. They then spend most of that stored solar energy trying to grow high enough for a better place in the sun, and they need 100 times their own weight in water to cool themselves as they do it, which of course requires them to put down miles of roots, which perhaps explains why 99 per cent of the mass of all living things is vegetable. This is a book to be heaped with laurels, to be awarded the palm.

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Farewell to all that

D J Taylor

Kowloon Tong
by Paul Theroux
Hamish Hamilton 213pp £16.99

IT'S NO disrespect to the 20 or so novels of Paul Theroux's 30-year career to say that the best work came early on. Faced with the vast, semi-autobiographical grinds of Theroux's maturity, the reader back-tracks to Saint Jack (1973) or The Family Arsenal (1975), where the writing was sharper, the obsessions less claustrophobically personal.

Presumably Theroux, who gets famously cross about bad reviews, has been taking the frequent critical lectures of this kind to heart, as Kowloon Tong is one of his strongest performances in years.

The omens for a work set in Hong Kong on the cusp of the hand-back were distinctly unpromising. Novels of this kind, got up to mark some historical baton-change, nearly always have a slightly facti-tious air, character taking second place to spectacle, plot invariably dovetailing into panorama. Here, by contrast, Theroux succeeds by ignoring — more or less — the broader sweep of time's pageant in favour of a minute concentration on the fruit of two mundane lives.

Recently elevated to the role of sole proprietors of a local factory by the death of their co-owner (the location gives the novel its title), the Mullards — 43-year-old Neville (aka "Bunt") and his solicitous mother Betty — live a close, sequestered life in the arid enclosures of "Albion Cottage". Like their domicile, with its out-of-date appliances and royal portraits, the Mullards are a potent symbol of displacement. With 50 years of colonial exile under her capacious belt, Mrs Mullard is still a die-hard ex-pat, apostrophising the locals as "Chinky-Chonks" and refusing to eat in Chinese restaurants.

Studiously indifferent to the prospect of change at the factory, Bunt simply files official communications away unread), the Mullards are soon made sharply aware that this carefully regulated existence, eked out with trips to the races and Bunt's lunch-hour sojourns in the brothels, is under siege. The future, at first manifested in tiny shocks to the system, as when the factory manager buys a flat on the mainland, is personified in the looming shape of Mr Hung, a Chinese entrepreneur who has barely been introduced to Bunt at the club before he offers to buy him out.

Bunt's initial impulse is to regard Hung as a tedious irritation. Unfortunately the Chinese turns out to be a sharp operator, with a nice line in blackmail, gifts to Bunt's mistress, a factory girl named Mei-ping, and a willing audience in Betty, who fancies a bungalow back home. The likely state of post-colonial Hong Kong having been explained to him, Bunt capitulates, only to find that his interests have been engaged. Summoned to "celebrate" the sale, he discovers that Hung has invited Mei-ping and her friend Ah Fu. Last seen leaving by taxi in the company of her host, Ah Fu disappears.

Inevitably, what lurks behind this account of frosty negotiation and the inward fury of people suddenly driven to appreciate their powerlessness in the face of events is a parable of culture clash. Page upon page comes crammed with epigrammatic Bunt-endorsed résumés of the Chinese character ("They carried on their lives in whispers and their business in shouts. If they wanted you to accept a present they rammed it down your throat, and the present was never an expensive thing"), but the final effect is to induce scepticism. Between Bunt and Hung there exists only mutual contempt. Mental conventions are set in granite; attempts at communication hardly scratch the surface.

Suitably enough, given the larger issues looming at the novel's edge, Kowloon Tong ends with a series of betrayals: Mei-ping, the factory workforce, Bunt's vague hopes — all these are no match for Hung and the Quisling at Albion Cottage.



Commerce with communism . . . Souvenirs from Hong Kong's future

Betty's transformation from querulous substitute wife into a figure of genuine malevolent power is one of the best things in the book. Earlier, and prophetically, Bunt blames "Hong Kong, the way it cut off people's roots and made them selfish and smug, and greedy and spineless". Certainly his own moral atrophy is no match for the real evil that confronts him. But Bunt's failing is only weakness. It seems safe to assume, on the strength of Theroux's excellent novel, that there are other, more conspicuous villains, and that they might inhabit government offices rather than the factories of Kowloon Tong.

Last glow of empire as the sun sets in east

Simon Heffer

Last Post: The End of Empire In the Far East
by John Keay
John Murray 400pp £22

I AM NOT sure where the British currently are on the question of post-imperial guilt; you know, that commodity of deep shame for its role in the oppression and exploitation of colonial peoples during what Sir John Seeley so memorably called "the expansion of England". Some Britons never believed in it; one had only to look at how other European powers discharged their responsibilities abroad to see that they were, if there would be such a thing, model imperialists. Rarely, too, did the British outstay their welcome; and did their best to leave legacies that made governing by the indigenous peoples as easy as possible.

Comparative imperial achievement, in this sense, is one of the many themes of John Keay's immensely well-researched and entertaining book. Concerning himself with that part of the world east of India, south of China and north of Australia, he illustrates the rise, decline and fall of the British, Dutch, French and American empires in the Far East.

Although Keay is not above a bit of satire at the British old colonials' expense, one thing happily emerges by the end; that former British outposts such as Singapore and Malaysia have been paragons of regional stability and prosperity. By contrast, the French empire in Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia and the Americans' experiment in the Philippines have all had to suffer oceans of bloodshed during and after decolonisation, and are not wholly right yet. By accident, the British might just have found something of which they could be proud.

Keay outlines the respective versions of imperialism with great insight. The Dutch, who reached the region first, were largely in it for the money; but when confronted with difficulties from the natives, such as in Badong in 1906, panicky Dutch troops slaughtered 1,000 people, many of them women and children. The British, also in it for the money, at least tried to govern responsibly, and managed to avoid perpetrating any such excesses in this region. The French had more noble motives. Not interested in an empire for the sake of money, they instead pursued a programme of largely cultural imperialism. As Keay points out, it meant more to the French that a Vietnamese should convert to Catholicism and speak their language than it did that they served any economic purpose.

This non-exploitation, as the anti-imperialists might see it, was however another definition of economic non-development. French colonialists went to Vietnam before the war and, while inspecting the civilised Gallic ambience of the cities, could not help but reflect on how it was provided entirely by French money. The country was producing nothing to sustain this outward show of wealth.

Nationalism had been on the boil for 20 years before the second world war, inadvertently assisted by the British in their tolerance of other countries' troublemakers. One of these, Ho Chi Minh, was to be France's nemesis in Indochina. Once Mao had won his victory in China in 1949, the spread of the communist message to neighbouring polities became inevitable. For entirely ideological reasons, the Americans willingly stepped in where the French could not wait to get out.

It is the American colonial experience that presents one of the great paradoxes of this history. After some initial heavy-handedness in the late 19th century, the American experiment in the Philippines had been about setting a path towards liberation and nationalism. They were proud that they managed to fulfil this aim in 1946. But within a few years, they were back on an imperialist scheme with a vengeance — though Keay points out that Americans would shudder to be accused of such a thing in the context of Vietnam. One of this book's few weaknesses is that Keay does not explore sufficiently the succession of political gymnastics that took the US into its painful involvement in Vietnam.

The surrender of Hong Kong to China on June 30 will be a day, as freedom of speech ends in Hong Kong, for Britain to note that the only guilt it should feel is that of not maintaining this part of empire a good deal longer.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Not Entitled: a Memoir, by Frank Kermode (Flamingo, £6.99)

KERMODE'S autobiography is full of lacunae, as it were, from the trivial to the consequential. He mentions a friend with a talent for rude limericks: "I can still remember one . . . fit to be remembered for old time's sake, but not to be quoted." Or of Sydney: "Of the pleasures of that city I shall not write here, but they were not negligible." Of his marriage: "It occurs to me that . . . if I were Rousseau, or perhaps even some quite ordinary autobiographer, I should say something about that. But I don't intend to." What, you may find yourself asking by now, kind of autobiography is this? In a sense, it is quite ordinary. Manx upbringing, war service on some old tub in the merchant navy, but the mental means which allowed him to escape a working-class background and eventually become King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge are not referred to at all, unless we accept the evidence of his own prose — at once rich, feline and precise — as evidence that he could have written a book like The Sense Of An Ending. But this doesn't mean you won't like the book: it is beautifully written, haunting in detail and in his discomfort with himself.

The Office Jungle, by Judi James (HarperCollins, £5.99)

JAMES, a former model, a novelist whose titles include Cover Girls, Carmine and Supermodel and a developer of "image and presentation skills", has written a book about how to survive in office jobs. Aha, I thought, target practice. Funny thing is, it's not bad. Chapter headings include "How to Lie Effectively" and "How to Look As Though You're Working Hard When You're Not". (Avoid doodling, yawning, staring off into space, sighing, tapping, and dismantling your pen. I once doodled so fiercely during a meeting that I had to send out for more paper. Now look at me.) Get it if you are leading a life of quiet desperation.

Vanishing Diaspora: the Jews in Europe since 1945, by Bernard Wasserstein (Penguin, £9.99)

FASCINATING and ultimately depressing look at the after-effects of the Shoah, the central dilemma best summed up by Wasserstein's question: "Would disappearance by murder and emigration in Eastern Europe be matched in the West by dissolution into a society that killed by kindness?" I am still haunted by the glimpse, in 1989, of an old man, one of the last Jews in the ghetto of Cracow, ducking back into his decrepit doorway as I passed. He was, in a sense, a thousand years old; but he is not there any more.

In last week's issue John Vidal's book McLibel: Burger Culture On Trial was incorrectly titled

Robinson Crusoe of the senses

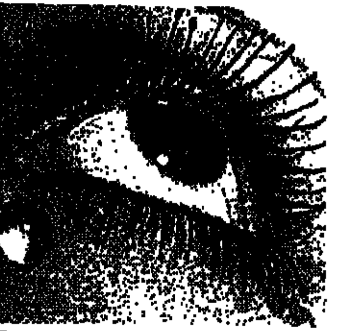
Andrew O'Hagan

The Diving-Bell and the Butterfly
by Jean-Dominique Bauby
trans Jeremy Leggatt
Fourth Estate 139pp £9.99

THERE have always been writers capable of rising to the occasions and complications of their illnesses, and some of them — Katherine Mansfield, William Soutar, Oscar Moore — might be thought to have been at their best when doing so.

Not all writers respond to physical disability by turning their degeneration into a subject, though: some (like Proust and Robert Louis Stevenson) rather find a new imaginative strength in the midst of all their shivering and hacking, and they use it to build colourful worlds far beyond (or far behind) the dim light of the sick room. For all their terrors, however, all the writers mentioned were still able to drive the pencil across the page, and command the sickening body with the force of the mind. Even at their worst, they could still make writing happen.

Jean-Dominique Bauby had a massive stroke while test-driving a new BMW in the winter of 1995. The Beatles' song "A Day in the Life" was playing on the radio as he drove into the Paris office of Elle. Bauby was the magazine's editor, and clearly, from his account, he had all the vanity and worry and lunchability common to those who hold up well in those jobs. While driving home he goes dizzy, everything blurs, and he feels like someone who has taken LSD. He thinks he is too old for such fantasies as this, and then he falls into a coma.



'Tears': Man Ray Photographs (Thames & Hudson, £19.95)

"Paralysed from head to toe," writes Bauby, "the patient is imprisoned inside his own body, his mind intact, but unable to speak or move. In my case, blinking my left eye is my only means of communication. Of course, the sufferer is the last to hear the good news. I myself had 20 days of deep coma and several weeks of grogginess and somnolence before I fully appreciated the extent of the damage . . . When I finally surfaced, I was in Room 119 of the Naval Hospital at Berck-sur-Mer on the French Channel coast. This same Room 119, now infused with the first light of day."

Bauby could see well enough the first light of day; as you read his account of his final days, you feel he is coming to see the slowness of things, and the stillness of all, in a way that is new to him. This once-busy man is now busy with nothing bar his own thoughts: he interprets light, and people's looks, and the clatter of heels outside. Lying in his bed he becomes all consciousness. He has "locked-in syndrome", a condition which renders him mentally alert but frozen in body. His mind wanders the corridors of the hospital — finding lighthouses the colour of schoolboy rugby shirts; discovering Western ghost towns — and his dreams become part of his everyday, a hot blizzard through his ward.

Bauby becomes a sort of Robinson Crusoe of the senses: he is stranded but has all the mental stuff with which to build something of a bearable life. And one day he sees footprints, and the promise of something to take him out of himself.

What he finds is a friendly new alphabet. All the most frequently used letters in French are arranged in order, so they can be read out by someone with a voice, and Bauby can blink to stop the voice at the letter he has in mind. And so he has a system of communication, the system that allows him to write the book. Bauby gives a lot of himself away when describing the process, with its irritations, its confusions, its dreadful slowness. But he makes astonishing use of it.

This book would be no more tender and brilliant had it been written by Bauby in illuminated manuscript. His laborious work with the eye only adds to one's sense of the power and beauty of the thing. But it is the writing itself — so full of the world's noise, the day's pattern across the wall, the mind's perfect agility and quietness, the man's courage and decency and honour, and his love of his children — which makes this book so great. Everyone should own a copy.

Pynchon's oddball couple

John Dugdale

Mason & Dixon
by Thomas Pynchon
Cape 773pp £16.99

EMPIRE'S end has been the common theme of Thomas Pynchon's bulkier fiction, linking V (1963), which tracks Britain's decline from Khartoum to Suez, to Gravity's Rainbow (1973), set in the final months of the second world war and documenting the death-throes of European geopolitical hegemony. Written in the USA of the 1960s, these astoundingly inventive novels held a quizzical mirror up to the new superpower, already itself late-imperial.

Epic yet friskily parodic, politically *engagé* yet permeated by the fantastic, they anticipated and in some cases influenced the subsequent "new wave history" of García Márquez, Fuentes, Rushdie, Eco and Carey, much of it similarly preoccupied with national identity. For the 17 years after Gravity's Rainbow, however, the reclusive pioneer published no further fiction — and the eventual follow-up novel turned out to be Vineland, set in the Reaganite present and tracing the disintegration of California's sixties counterculture.

So Mason & Dixon finds him back reimagining the past after a 24-year time-out, once again drawn to a Britain on the verge of losing an empire. Like other Pynchon heroes, the astronomer Charles Mason and the surveyor Jeremiah Dixon are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern-esque bystanders, confined to the footnotes of official history. Merely over on a working visit, as the two Englishmen entrusted from 1763 to 1766 with defining the disputed boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland, the pair nevertheless gave their names to America's north-south political fault-line — and thereby to slave-owning Dixie.

Pynchon began researching a Mason-Dixon book in the 1970s, but set the project aside. Possibly the impasse resulted from a questioning of the early works which later became — in a 1984 introduction to his 1950s short stories — a bewilderingly wholesale strategic rethink. Tricksy history, the fiction of ideas and the fatally arty legacy of Europe were banished, to be replaced by American road novels. Vineland embodies this new anti-aesthetic. In Mason & Dixon Pynchon finds a diaphonic, largely linear narrative that nevertheless produces an overflowing Hogarthian canvas; a text that is rarely cryptic but readmits his intellectual preoccupations.

Fractionally longer than Gravity's Rainbow, Mason & Dixon is ostensibly a winter's tale told in post-revolutionary Philadelphia by the surveyors' chaplain, the Rev Wicks Cherrycoke, to entertain his nephews and niece. Its language is 18th century English, reproduced on the page complete with capitalised nouns and abbreviations.

Far from confining itself to the mapping of the Line, Cherrycoke's narrative recounts its heroes' lives from their first meeting in 1760 to Mason's death in 1786. One-third of the book has unfolded before the eponyms reach America, depicting a joint star-gazing mission to southern Africa and establishing a bickering double act between Dixon (northern, Quaker, republican, sociable, randy) and his partner, a repressed, melancholic widower.

Disembarked at last in an increasingly rebellious colony, they run into Benjamin Franklin and George Washington before beginning to plot the boundary. As they advance westwards, the pair experience the teeming diversity of "something styling itself 'America' coming into being, ripening, like a Tree-ful of Cherries in a good summer". Yet the line they etch foredooms the nascent nation to civil war.

Vineland led some to surmise that Pynchon had suffered the same early burn-out as Melville. Mason & Dixon shows these fears to be unfounded. The architectural daring, the comic fecundity, the power to extract riches from dry source material, the synthesising energy, are all unimpaired. The book's linguistic feat alone — 400,000 words in the language of Sterne, Jefferson and Adam Smith — is phenomenal.

Pynchon's writing in this foreign idiom retains its gusto and tonal suppleness right up to the final pages, when a beautifully handled elegiac coda is lightened by a meeting with the rival double act of Boswell and Johnson. In the latter half of the American section, however, the novel seems to lose direction. Its time-scheme and Washington's early appearance together arouse expectations that Mason & Dixon will fill the striking vacancy in American literature for a rendering of the revolutionary era. Yet as the odd couple plod onwards into the boondocks, you gradually realise that this slow-moving Shandyan picaresque is all you're going to get.

CLEARLY, the character sketches in these chapters are not merely comedy for its own sake: the sheer variety of oddball or marginalised immigrants the surveyors meet — Moravians, Jesuits, Freemasons, Scandinavians, Celts, Mohawk Indians — argues the impossibility of containing such unruly abundance in one nation. But, just as Mason pines for Greenwich and rejoining the quest for Longitude, so the reader would rather be back in the insurgent eastern cities than hearing tales of a French chef's robot duck or a Prague rabbi's golem.

Pynchon is here stymied by his book's factional premise, its commitment to dogging the heroes' footsteps. Elsewhere that premise is an asset, taking the novel to three continents and so permitting compelling connections between slavery in Virginia and Cape Town, incipient industrialism in old and new England, the restless ingenuity of Franklin and John Harrison.

Overridingly and overwhelmingly, Mason & Dixon is a majestic comeback, which will make most other fiction this year look puny and jejune.

If you would like to order a copy of Mason & Dixon at the special discount price of £12.99 contact Books @ The Guardian Weekly

Football Premiership: Manchester United 3 Middlesbrough 3

Juninho keeps title alive

David Lacey at Old Trafford

MONDAY did its best to rain on Manchester United's parade. Their fourth Premiership title in five seasons remains within easy reach but after a second draw in three days they are not yet home and certainly not dry.

A drenching Mancunian morning left Old Trafford suffering acute twinges of renewed anxiety while Middlesbrough went home with their hopes of staying up still realistically alive, though tempered by the disappointment of losing a 3-1 lead.

Once more Alex Ferguson's team went two goals down and once more they owed their point to Solskjaer, who headed the scores level at 3-3 midway through the second half. Given the strength of attacking pressure United maintained after that, Middlesbrough did well to survive. But they deserved to draw because of the way their passing and movement had earlier swept past the opposition's shaky cover.

So United now lead Liverpool by four points, and four goals, at the top of the Premier League and each has two matches to play. A defeat for Liverpool against Wimbledon at Selhurst Park on Tuesday would end Anfield's interest in the title but Monday's outcome has kept alive the lingering hopes of Newcastle, who would still be in a position to overtake the leaders if they were to win at West Ham on Tuesday.

Middlesbrough's point here will have sent a shudder through the half-dozen teams separated by two points who are now hovering above the bottom three. On this evidence Bryan Robson's side are quite capable of winning at Blackburn on Thursday, although the torn hamstring which forced Ravanelli off before half-time and will threaten the Italian's place in the FA Cup on May 17, was an ill-timed blow.

Juninho was again Middlesbrough's inspiration. The little Brazilian found space in positions the defence had forgotten about. Yet Middlesbrough were equally well served by Blackmore, an Old Trafford old boy who consistently broke up attacks and brought the ball forward with determination.

The conditions were never going to suit either United's passing game or their penchant for striking quickly on the break. Giggs was missing again but would have found it no easier than anyone else to drag the ball through the surface water. It was Juninho's ability to skim over the saturated conditions that made him such an initial threat.

Afterwards, Ferguson described United's defending as "the worst in the last six years at this club". He also noted that against the Premier League's bottom seven this season his side had conceded 23 goals.

Old Trafford had not long squelched to its seats before Juninho threatened to spoil United's day. Just before the quarter-hour a long, probing sequence of passes ended with the Brazilian accepting a return ball from Hignett before placing it beyond Schmeichel's reach.

United drew level in the 35th minute: Solskjaer fed the ball in from the left and, after a blocked attempt by Cole, it ran to Keane, who hit a firm drive.

But then Juninho found Freestone, and with his first touch the substitute sent in Emerson to restore the lead. Two minutes later, Hignett nodded in Mustoe's centre.

Had Middlesbrough been able to hold their two-goal advantage until half-time United might have been done for. But in the 42nd minute Cantona produced a superbly angled pass for Gary Neville to score his first goal for the club with a well-struck shot into the far corner.

In the second half Manchester United regained much of their normal composure and exploited the wings to better effect, especially on the right from where the equaliser eventually came in the 67th minute, Solskjaer heading in from Gary Neville's centre.

Division Three: Hereford United 1 Brighton 1

Trap-door slams shut on Hereford's hopes

Frank Keating

AN HOUR afterwards some 3,000 jubilant supporters decked in blue and encircled in their pen at Edgar Street by stone-faced riot police were still hysterically acclaiming Brighton's continued Football League life.

From the remainder of this dinky battlefield, in ones and twos and faces as white as their famous bull mascot, the Hereford corps had tiptoed away to their silent city or back to their hillocks and hills, leaving in the dressing room under the low-slung grandstand their players still weeping unashamed tears — to give the lie to a taunt last week that they were but carpetbaggers, footballing mercenaries with no necessary allegiance to this once perky little rural club.

The Brighton throng, essaying a delirious celebration conga, had just witnessed a miracle of football resurrection: 12 points adrift and dead and buried at Christmas but now, hey presto, a conjuror's leap from the coffin and a continued Football League life after a one-off match, unique in League history, of excruciating tension.

The 1-1 draw ensured Brighton's survival. Hereford, who had to win, should have been three or four up and out of sight by half-time after coming out to play with a sprightly, carefree courage which quite belied the occasion. It was Brighton, familiar with this tragedians' Saturday matinee script for months, who were racked almost throughout with the tremors and quaking heebie-jeebies.

Hereford attacked the passion play at almost a dalliance, took the lead early enough, surrendered it gormlessly after an hour and then, for all the further chances, could not steady their aim to take but one of them. They played well enough to make it ludicrous that they were anywhere near this tumbril in the first place, let alone kneeling under the guillotine.

Anyway, cue tears. Half the side were weeping buckets before even they left the pitch, while yards away Brighton's remarkable manager, the eponymously indomitable Steve Gritt, turned cartwheels between giving joyous interviews.

Down in the dungeon his opposite number, the decent and chivalrous Graham Turner, announced his resignation and said Hereford "must stay full-time to bounce straight back".

Meanwhile Hereford's chairman Peter Hill valiantly spoke of a meeting with the council and a property company "to stabilise out creditors and build for the future".

At the meeting just up the road at the Racecourse they heard the extended delirium of Brighton's cheering supporters. A few minutes later the 4.30 race was won, at 5-1, by a nag called Magical Blues. Quite enough said.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Arsenal 0, Newcastle Utd 1; Chelsea 0, Leeds 0; Coventry 1, Derby County 2; Leicester 2, Man Utd 2; Liverpool 2, Tottenham 1; Middlesbro 3, Aston Villa 2; Nottingham Forest 1, Wimbledon 1; Southampton 2, Blackburn 0, Sunderland 3, Everton 0, West Ham 5, Sheffield Wed 1. (Monday): Man Utd 3; Middlesbro 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Man Utd (played 36-points 71); 2, Liverpool (36-67); 3, Arsenal (37-65).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division
Bradford C 3, QPR 0; Charlton 0, Sheff Utd 0; C Palace 1, Port Vale 1; Grimsby 4, Southend 0; Huddersfld 0, Swindon 0; Ipswich 1, Birmingham 1; Man City 3, Reading 2; Oldham 3, Norwich 0; Oxford 5, Barnsley 1; Stoke 2, West Brom 1; Tranmere 2, Bolton 2; Wolves 0, Portsmouth 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (46-98); 2, Barnsley (46-80); 3. Wolves (46-76).

Second Division
Brentford 0, Peterboro 1; Bristol R 1, Rotherham 2; Burnley 4, Watford 1; Bury 2, Millwall 0; Chesterfld 1, Notts Co 0; Gillingham 2, Shrewsbry 0; Luton 1, Stockport 1; Plymouth 0, Bournemth 0; Preston 2, Walsall 0; Wrexham 2, Blackpool 1; Wycombe 2, Bristol City 0; York 1, Crewe Alexandra 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Bury (46-84); 2, Stockport (46-82); 3, Luton (46-78).

Third Division
Barnet 2, Colchester 4; Cambridge 0, Fulham 1; Carlisle 2, Exeter 0; Chester 0, Leyton O 1; Darlington 2, Cardiff 1; Doncaster 2, Torquay 1; Hereford 1, Brighton 1; Hull 0, Scarboro 2; Lincoln 0, Rochdale 2; Northmptn 1, Sc'thorpe 0; Swansea 2, Hartlepool 2; Wigan 2, Mansfield 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan Athletic (46-87); 2, Fulham (46-87); 3. Carlisle (46-84).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE Premier Division
Aberdeen 2, Raith 0; Dunfrmline 3, Kilmarnk 1; Dundee U 1, Hearts 0; Hibernian 1, Celtic 3. Monday: Rangers 0. Motherwell 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (34-77); 2, Celtic (34-71); 3. Dundee Utd (34-60).

First Division
East Fife 0, Airdrie 0; Stirling A 4, Clydebank 2. **Leading positions:** 1, St Johnstone (35-77); 2; Airdrie (35-60); 3. Dundee (35-55).

Second Division
Ayr Utd 2, Brechin 0; Stenhousemuir 1, Berwick 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Ayr Utd (35-74); 2, Hamilton (35-73); 3, Livingston (35-63).

Third Division
Arbroath 1, Alloa 2; Queens Pk 1; Ross Co 2, Inverness 0, Forfar 4. **Leading positions:** 1, Inverness CT (35-76); 2, Forfar (35-64); 3, Ross Cty (35-64).

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

England at the double

A HEADER from Teddy Sheringham two minutes from half-time and a ferocious shot by Alan Shearer seconds before the final whistle enabled England to repeat at Wembley last week the 2-0 victory over Georgia that they had achieved in Tbilisi last November, in the World Cup qualifying Group Two match.

But for Scotland there was no such joy. They suffered their first defeat in the qualifying stages, going down 2-1 to dominant Sweden at the Ullevi Stadium, Gothenburg, in their qualifying encounter in Group Four.

Although Scotland had a penalty claim turned down in the closing minutes, manager Craig Brown admitted: "We have to concede that Sweden were the better team and gave a really good performance."

Roy Keane missed a penalty two minutes after the interval against Romania in Bucharest where the Republic of Ireland went down 1-0 in Group Eight. The defeat leaves the Irish facing a mountain to climb to reach their third consecutive finals.

Northern Ireland's faint chances of reaching the finals all but disappeared when their Group Nine match against Armenia at Yerevan ended in a goalless draw. The visitors were denied a goal in the 11th minute, and after that could find no way past Armenia's formidable keeper Roman Berezovsky.

Meanwhile England's attempt to stage the World Cup in 2006 received a boost from Fifa's general secretary Sepp Blatter, who backed the Football Association's right to bid for the tournament. His comments in a radio interview in Britain will raise hopes that the competition with Germany for the tournament may be swinging England's way.



PETER SHILTON (above), goalkeeper for 31 years and 1,000 games, including 125 for England, has been given the boot by Third Division Leyton Orient on the grounds that he can no longer hoof the ball far enough up the pitch. The 47-year-old, once lauded for his ability to save shots with supreme ability, reacted angrily: "I thought goalkeepers were supposed to be judged on their goalkeeping."

THE Football Association admitted that future England internationals may be shown on pay-per-view television. The FA's commercial director, Phillip Carling said that the huge revenues available from such matches presented a "compelling case" for pay-per-view because important games could bring in as much as £60 million.

FA CUP finalists Chelsea added to the foreign legion in residence at Stamford Bridge with the signing of Norwegian striker Tore Andre Flo, on a free transfer from Brann Bergen. Flo's move follows two further spring signings by player-manager Ruud Gullit: Gustavo Poyet (free) from Real Zaragoza; and Celestine Babayaro (£2.25 million), from Anderlecht.

IRELAND, who narrowly failed to qualify for the 1999 cricket World Cup in Malaysia recently, achieved a historic victory in Dublin when they beat Middlesex by 46 runs in the Benson & Hedges Cup. Ireland made 281 in their 50 overs and then bowled out the visitors for 235 with 20 balls remaining. Mike Gatting, thus achieved the unhappy distinction of becoming the first captain of an English county side to lose to Ireland. But he took defeat with all the chivalry of an England selector. "They thoroughly deserved to win."

Middlesex suffered further humiliation when they went down to Essex and Glamorgan in the following rounds. Ireland, too, looked a pale shadow of their former selves in their next game, against Somerset (349-7), losing by 221 runs.

NASEEM HAMED retained his World Boxing Organisation and International Boxing Federation featherweight titles with a 93-second victory over Billy Hardy in Manchester. Hamed sent Hardy crashing with his first punch. A left hook to the jaw floored him a second time, and although Hardy got up again the referee called off the fight, giving the Sheffield boxer his 26th straight win — 13 of them in the first round.

In another all-British contest on the same bill, Robin Reid outscored Henry Wharton to retain his world super-middleweight title after 12 absorbing rounds.

ALEX CRIVILLE delighted thousands of his home supporters by dominating the 500cc Spanish Grand Prix at Jerez last Sunday. He led from start to finish, to beat Honda team-mate and world champion Michael Doohan of Australia, who finished nearly six seconds back. Another Honda rider, Japan's Tadayuki Okada, was third.

LOLA Formula One Limited, the company which withdrew its team from this year's championship, has gone into liquidation with debts of up to $10 million. The firm's few assets include the team's two cars, which are expected to be bought by collectors.

SCOTLAND'S Stephen Hendry failed in his bid to win a record seventh Embassy World Snooker Championship title when Irishman Ken Doherty, aged 27, beat him 18-12 in the best-of-35-frames final at Sheffield to become only the second overseas winner of the title after Canada's Cliff Thorburn. Doherty picked up £210,000 in prize money.

Rugby League Challenge Cup final: Bradford Bulls 22 St Helens 32

Martyn wins ultimate prize

Paul Fitzpatrick at Wembley

TOMMY MARTYN arrived at the press conference after the match just in time to hear his coach Shaun McRae describe him as the finest stand-off in the English game.

This was a rare moment because McRae, as he has shown many times since he arrived at Knowsley Road, is reluctant to pick out individual players. For this most pragmatic of Australians the team effort is always paramount.

This was one occasion, however, when McRae could happily heap plaudits on one man. "Each player had a job to do and Tommy achieved something above and beyond the call of duty," he said. "It was the sign of a champion."

Martyn's profound contribution to St Helens's second successive Wembley victory was reflected in his overwhelming share of the man-of-the-match poll for the Lance Todd Trophy: at 31 votes out of 41, it was the week's second landslide.

Martyn goes into all games with his knee lightly taped. It is perhaps primarily a psychological comfort but it is also a reminder of the damage which took such a chunk out of his career and which confined him to a truncated appearance as a substitute last year — when, for a time, he thought his reconstructed knee had collapsed again.

The mental and physical effects of the injury have taken a long time to overcome fully but here last Saturday he looked close to the finished article.

As the sport is suffering from a shortage of gifted stand-offs right now, Martyn's emergence as a player of genuine class is timely, with the Australians due in Britain later this year; he and his half-back partner Bobbie Goulding are surely now in pole position for the first Test at Wembley.

"It was something I have dreamed of since I was a kid," said Martyn, whose father Tommy played for Warrington in the 1975 final. "Everything just came right and it was the best performance of my career. I saw Dad in the crowd as I came up the steps and gave him a big thumbs-up. It was a special moment."

Last year, Goulding's bombs confounded the Bradford full-back Nathan Graham and helped Saints to win from an improbable position. This time Goulding reversed his approach and from two of his low, angled kicks the alert Martyn scored two tries. They were just the sort of instinctive and imaginative plays that might trouble an Australian defence.

There was much more besides from Martyn, not least the pass which sent Chris Joynt clear on a burst of irresistible power, and the precise raking kick from which Anthony Sullivan touched down, dubiously it has to be said.

He made no more crucial contribution, though, than the remarkable ankle tap that brought Danny Peacock to ground six minutes after half-time.

Paul Newlove then completed a decisive spell of St Helens defence by somehow holding up Abi Ekoku on the line and Bradford were denied a try which had looked inevitable. From then on there was no danger of Saints losing.

Within 10 minutes St Helens, covering well for the absent Alan Hunte, had scored the final two of their five tries and led 28-10. In spite of late tries from Glen Tomlinson and James Lowes the Bulls were never likely to engineer the kind of escape from there that Saints managed to conjure up last year.

For last year's Lance Todd winner, Robbie Paul, the afternoon stood in stark contrast. He produced some dazzling moments but never threatened to score three tries this time, and at the end the hobbling New Zealander was wincing with a foot injury. X-rays showed no fracture but he will be sent for further scans.

It was banderillas and pain all round for the Bulls. They were arguably the better side before the interval but found themselves 16-10 down when Karle Hammond, with an astonishing display of strength, scored on the stroke of half-time.

Peacock got one of the Bulls' tries before the interval and Paul Loughlin the other when he cleverly intercepted Hammond's pass and strode clear. But for the admirable "Lockers" the day was a re-run of 1987, 1989, 1991 and 1996, and he now has a unique collection of five losers' medals. Poor lad.

The Bradford coach Matthew Elliott said: "The best team on the day won. We had opportunities to score but we failed to execute them and we coughed up the ball too much. I thought the effort from my guys was supreme but a lot of it was misdirected. We played a bit dumb in the second half."

The two sides meet again on Sunday in the Super League, and it promises to be a confrontation full of possibilities.

● A hat-trick of tries for Hull Kinston Rovers's livewire Papuan scrum-half Stanley Gene was the feature of the Plate final, a Wembley curtain-raiser that became grossly one-sided after a tight first half. In beating Hunslet Hawks 60-14, the First Division side demonstrated the chasm now opening up in the English leagues and raised the question of whether the Plate is worth repeating. Rovers, with a prize of £50,000, will believe it is.

St Helens loose-forward Hammond manages to squirm free before grounding the ball on the stroke of half-time PHOTO: REBECCA NADEN

Golf Italian Open

Langer putts his way back in a course-record charge

Michael Britten in Brescia

BERNHARD LANGER halted José Maria Olazábal's victory charge in its tracks here last Sunday, snatching the Italian Open title by breaking the course record with a fourth-round 64.

A thrilling duel between the two former Masters champions ended with the German taking the $125,000 prize by one stroke with a 15-under-par total of 273.

Olazábal, the overnight leader, hardly threw it away with his closing 68, rather he was buried by some inspired putting. Langer had nine birdies, four coming on the last six holes, and single-putted every green from the 14th. The Spaniard had looked set fair for his second win in only five European events since his comeback when he turned for home ahead after an outward 34.

But Langer, whose run of 16 seasons with at least one European victory ended last year, had gone out in 32 after starting three behind, sinking putts of 35ft and 18ft for birdies at the two most difficult par-fours, the 1st and 8th.

He then birdied the 11th by blading a wedge-putt into the cup from six yards. Olazábal matched the German's further birdies at the 13th and 14th with two of his own at the 11th and 12th but could not live with what followed.

First Langer holed from 10 feet to level at the long 16th; then he got down from 12ft to save par from a bunker after going too boldly for the flag at the short 17th. Next, he rolled in from the fringe of the 18th green.

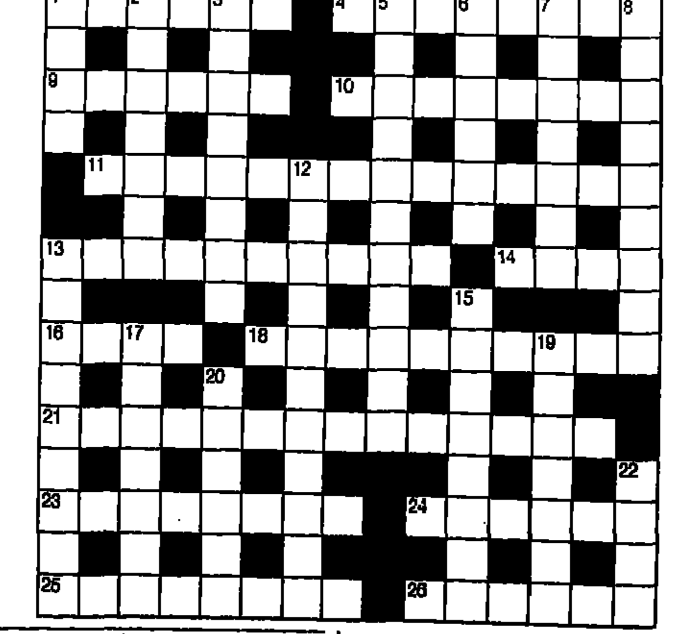
It left Olazábal needing two birdies in the last three holes. That proved beyond him, but the $83,000 runner-up's cheque lifted him to second place in the Volvo rankings and to 10th in the Ryder Cup qualifying table.

"It's a marvellous feeling to get another victory after nearly two years," said Langer, celebrating his 35th win on the European Tour. "I thought José Maria would be the man to beat, and it sure turned out that way. I switched to a wooden driver from metal for the last two rounds and that paid off."

Olazábal said: "I am not disappointed as I did not give the tournament away. Bernhard won it with an unbelievable display."

● Phil Blackmar demonstrated he certainly has a sense of the dramatic when he birdied the first extra hole of a sudden-death play-off to win the Shell Houston Open. Blackmar and fellow-American Kevin Sutherland both shot 70s to start and finish the final round neck and neck. It was his third play-off victory.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

1 See 24
4 Posh vehicle, mostly plastic for safety (5,3)
9 The purpose of camping? (6)
10 Fund arranged to keep unruly mare only just mounted? (8)
11 The Guardian's time out made us re-roof a house (3,5,2,4)
13 Fired without a great fire — given a red coat? (10)
14 Shaw's connection with Lawrence a trifle upset (4)
16 Sounds of animals in stables (4)
18 Jack Horner, for example, quite topless in the refectory (5,5)
21 From US, Ghana and Gaul men use their tongues (5,9)
23 Orphaned Victorian poet, a writer going in for a piece of money (8).
24,1ac Choosy as to hiring of a saloon, like 1711 (4,2,6)
25 I'd seen my way out in it (4'1,3)
26 Stern cut to a point (6)

Down

1 It's a nuisance father being at home (4)
2 Show you're keen, then possibly you'll find employment (7)
3 On which to tee up and be quiet about it — I'm going to (4-4)
5, 20 17 Scott's poem amid 1 down etc, in mob that is mingling with minstrels outside (11,6)
6 Whistler put in light to get thinner (6)
7 2, they say, briefly like 17 11 (7)
8 Dog producing left-wing puzzles? (3,6)
12 Physical principle characteristic of 17 11 (11)
13 On leaving a great piece of music, the stomach needs comfrey (9)
15 The state of being guided upwards with knowledge (8)
17, 22 I'm round with new novel — new novel by aforesaid novelist (5,2,4)
19 You must read learner's part, so step on it (7)
20 See 5
22 See 17

Last week's solution